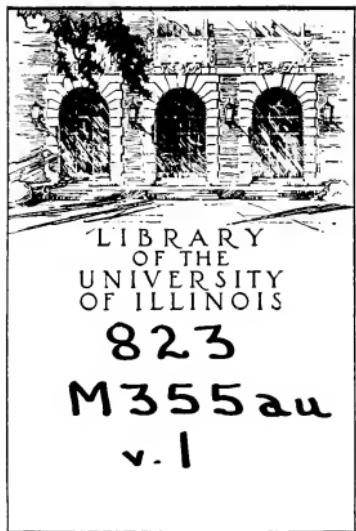




By Anne March (Mrs. Jeanette Caldwell)

Santini

part 1



M. K. I.

A U B R E Y.

A

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“EMILIA WYNDEHAM,”

&c. &c.

“Hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted within them, and they found no City to dwell in.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13 GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1854.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY REYNELL AND WEIGHT,
LITTLE FULTENEY STREET

Collection number, 10 July 1952.

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A U B R E Y.

CHAPTER I.

Oh, saw ye bonnie Leslie,
As she came across the Border.—BURNS.

It might be called a magnificent, though it was evidently, not a very ancient place.

It stood towering nearly upon the summit of a lofty eminence, commanding a wide expanse of champagne country, and backed by a range of high barren mountain hills, rising ridge above ridge in dark lowering succession. Barren and dreary they were, in truth, but concealing within their rocky bosoms mineral treasures which mustulti-

mately become the sources of untold wealth to those who had received this, as a desolate and almost valueless inheritance, from their forefathers.

A long winding walk led along the front of the hill; it was adorned with a profusion of American shrubs, flourishing in all their surpassing beauty. Azalias, rhododendrons, and the lovely waxen kalmias were there, flourishing in the highest perfection. They formed thickets,—they throve into lofty shrubs, approaching the size of forest trees,—while the grass beneath was enamelled with primroses, harebells, pink lychnis, and the sweet little cockle-shell stellaria struggling about among the undergrowth.

The mountain ash, at this time in full blossom; the hawthorn pink, red, white; the syringas, like orange flowers; that delight of every childish heart, the guelder-rose, lilacs, and laburnums—all that adorned the gardens of past generations, and all that modern research had added of flower wealth to our own, here mingled with a profusion—a rich extravagance of abundance, which in such things is so inexpressibly delicious—

one of the few luxuries that neither palls nor enervates.

Then, in this wilderness of beauty, birds were flitting about in extraordinary quantity, for no gardener was ever suffered to disturb them. The saucy robin hopped upon the walks just under your feet, his tiny poetical partner, the wren, whistled from a low thicket, or twittered and coquettled before him; little brown creepers stole up the trunks of the larger trees, and the golden-crested wren hung from the tender young branches of the oak; the burst of song from the blackbird broke forth from the brake; the thrushes answered one another from the summit of the trees!

It was all melody and happiness in this sweet world of feathered life.

And then the view!

What a lordly expanse!—like a picture of Claude's, like a description of Milton's—

“ Russet lawns and fallows grey,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray ;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The hovering clouds do often rest ;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide,
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees.”

Milton, one should have thought, must have almost painted from the scene before us—to add to the beauty of which—as if to leave nothing incomplete—massive woods were seen sweeping down from the nearer hills, reflected by a very large mere, or small lake, which lay sleeping in this day's clear sunshine, at the foot of the ascent. There stood the mansion, with its extent of deepest groves, possessing a something of almost ostentatious grandeur.

It was very large, that house, built in a sort of corrupt half-eastern, half-mediæval style of architecture—where forms were strangely jumbled together, and great offences no doubt committed against correct taste; but it looked so rich—such a confusion and profusion of ornament was lavished upon it—there was so great an extent, such an endless succession of roofs, and towers, and pinnacles, and oriel windows, and lancet windows—such a grand porch leading into such a noble hall, that the effect altogether was magnificent.

Then the stables, and the gardens, and the farm buildings, and all and everything were upon such a scale!

An almost royal scale!—And everything kept with a precision and neatness which showed that this was no display of unreal wealth—that this mighty flow of expense was maintained by a spring of proportional force.

But, to return to the shrubbery walks, the flowers, the birds, the lovely views, the birds singing as if in rivalry of each other, the cuckoo shouting, the sun shining, and the world of flowers of every hue around us.

Is this garden of Eden desolate, that no one appears to enjoy it?

Are its inhabitants all gone away to London at this loveliest season of the year, the two first weeks in May?—and have they left this scene of beauty to be enjoyed by half a score of gardeners, and half a dozen household servants?—as is one part of the inexplicable arrangements of people belonging to the great world?

No, one should imagine not, for here come two figures along the walk that, as a kind of terrace, crowns the brow of the hill, winding amid the purple and crimson rhododendron, the waxen calmias, the yellow and white azalias, the purple clusters of the

lilacs, and the streaming gold of the laburnums.

The one, a tall and slender figure, is that of a most lovely woman, one on whom Nature, as it sometimes pleases her to do, has lavished every perfection which belongs to complete, almost faultless, beauty—face, figure, grace of gesture, sweetness of expression, every charm was there.

She is dressed, however, with the utmost simplicity. A white muslin dress, confined by a white band of watered ribbon, clasped with a silver clasp of little value; a black silk scarf fringed at either end by the simple and cheap resource of roving away the cross threads till the others form the fringe; a light Leghorn hat, with a dark blue sarsenet ribbon. Such was her costume.

Her companion, a little girl of from three to five years old, wore a striped white and pink muslin high dress, over it a sort of blouse of white coutil, very sparingly ornamented; she had a large flapping hat tied over her profusion of curling hair, and showed beneath it a face that promised to rival in beauty that of her companion, whom one

could not for an instant doubt was her mother. They are walking hand in hand, and the little girl is lifting up her head, and chattering fast, and in a most animated manner, to which the lady responds with a sort of pensive smile, and by letting fall two or three sentences from time to time, tending to guide and direct in a certain degree the flowing current of the young one's thoughts and ideas.

Soon the little hand is withdrawn—a peacock butterfly settles upon a neighbouring guelder-rose—and away she flies with a shriek of delight to pursue it.

The lady looks after her fondly, yet with a strange fondness, as if passionate love were checked by some hidden and painful feeling; then she sighs—not a sigh of tender melancholy—not one of those sighs which a heart o'erfraught with love and the exquisite beauty of things gives forth, as the only true utterance to such feelings in a world such as ours. No! but a sigh of pain, of irritation, of dissatisfaction. Dissatisfied with itself, perhaps?—perhaps with all this astounding assemblage of beauty around? Even so.

The Lady Emma, for that was this lovely creature's name, seated herself upon a wooden bench, and cast her eyes upon the view before her, now spreading all its world of beauty to the fair shining sun; and as she gazed, her countenance assumed a strange, impatient expression, and she made a gesture with her beautiful foot as if she almost spurned it.

But, as the sun, descending towards the west, poured his streaming light upon the far-spreading landscape, diffusing a golden glow of inexpressible warmth and beauty over all things, a sadness the most pathetic stole over a face which, when softened by tenderness or melancholy, possessed an invincible charm.

So she sat there—her outer eye taking in the rich picture before her; mingling with—perhaps lending a colour to—the thoughts which so harassed and afflicted her.

Sometimes she sank into a reverie, in which past memories were but too busy; then suddenly she would stand up, clench her small fingers with a slight cry of anguish, gaze around her as if she were in a dream, and resume her place again.

Her little girl kept fluttering about the flowers, still chasing the bright blue dragon flies, or crimson butterflies; at last, having succeeded in capturing a peacock butterfly of extraordinary size and brilliancy, she came flying up to her mother, rejoicing in her prize.

She was struck aback by the dark expression of the mother's face; an expression which, once or twice during the last few weeks, she had seen there, and which she had sensibility enough to perceive, and tenderness to feel, more than is usual in a child of her age.

CHAPTER II.

What you do,
Still betters what is done ; when you speak, sweet,
I'd have you do it ever ; when you sing,
I'd have you buy and sell so ; when you do dance
I wish you a wave of the sea that you might ever do
Nothing but that.—WINTER'S TALE.

IT was a large London party, what people are now in the habit of calling by its old and long exploded name of drum—a word to me signifying nothing—without etymology that I know of, or the least connection of which I am aware between its ordinary sense and the one in which I am using it.

However, it was a drum.

And there was the usual crowding, disagreeable or agreeable, as the case may be, the usual hum of voices, the usual nothings exchanged, the usual affected laughs and vapid smiles which seem conventional among those hacknied in such assemblages ; whilst

the heart-beating excitement going on among the privileged few to whom such things were novelties, or to whom they afforded opportunity for interesting meetings—food for hope or for despair—all such excitements and emotions were happily concealed by the crowd, and almost as effectually as they would have been in a desert.

Of those who were still in the fresh enjoyment of newness in the world and its ways of assembling, there was one sitting in the corner of a little settee, listening with heart and soul to a conversation which was going on behind her.

This intent listener was a young and very beautiful girl. I will not attempt to describe her in detail, I will only wish you to imagine a charming creature whose fine features, eyes of the deepest purple-blue, and hair a golden auburn, with figure tall and slender as that of a Grace upon an antique gem, only served to enhance the charm of an ardent, animated countenance full of sweetness and spirit. Added to which a certain unaffected negligence of attitude—a certain softness in the tones of her voice, rendered

the Lady Emma, just presented, and enjoying her first season, the most attractive of human beings.

“To see her was to love her, and love, to love for ever.”

So felt many, however far from giving words to the thought.

Enough, the Lady Emma was the rage of the season, and she was not spoiled by it.

A rare perfection this, you must allow.

For which perfection she was not indebted to any particularly careful training; to the inculcation of principles lofty and pure, which raise the soul into a region above the mere world and its temptations and delights. For, alas! the Lady Emma had never known such advantages.

No, her immunity from the frivolity, the vanity, the selfish egotism, too often fostered in the bosom of the reigning beauty of the season, arose from the simplicity of her rearing, and a something of enthusiastic, warm-hearted, truthful feeling, implanted by the good hand of nature, which seemed to teach her, as if by instinct, the real value of the mere world’s admiration and the

worthlessness of the pedestal upon which she stood.

Her heart—and she had a heart, a sincere, honest, loving, though, ah! quite undisciplined heart—had as yet met with nothing in this new world upon which she had entered, to interest her.

She had been unfortunate, perhaps, you may think, but amid the host of admirers that fluttered round her, not one had offered a heart true and unsophisticated as her own—not one, but led her instantly to suspect that it was her success, rather than herself, that was worshipped—that her very face and form, her sweet gaiety, and lively feelings, would have possessed little power to charm, had it not been for the noise she had made, the universal admiration she had excited, and her being, in short, to speak vulgarly, the belle of the season.

There was one, however, that might have proved himself an exception to this rule; but that one she did not even know, had never been introduced to.

And this one is now present at the assembly.

A pale, thin, but delicately-formed man, of the middle stature he is, with a face of great beauty, singularly enhanced by a most refined expression,—for, if ever the union of intellect and sensibility were written upon a countenance, it was upon this.

This young man, plainly dressed, with a sort of unstudied yet gentlemanlike negligence that seemed well to become him, amidst the silken-lined sleeves, the fanciest waistcoats, the pearl and diamond studs of the young men around—stood leaning against a pillar in a somewhat obscure corner of the room, his eyes fixed with a sort of passionate wonder and admiration upon the charming creature on the settee. And yet this was the first time he had ever beheld her. He rarely frequented assemblies like the present. Some accidental reason of civility had led him, after an agreeable Club dinner with some of the cleverest men of his day, to look in at this drum ; and his eye had fallen upon the Lady Emma. He had gazed but a few moments on that sweet face, his ear had caught a few—very few—accents of that delightful voice, and he had become at once

the victim of one of those peculiar and uncontrollable passions for which it is impossible to account. Those of the antique world attributed such things to the sudden shaft of an all-powerful divinity, but the moderns are content to marvel, and to shudder in amazement at the inexplicable force of the sentiment ; acknowledging the fact that, strange as such things may appear, unquestionably such things are.

The last thing that William Aubrey ever would have expected of himself was that he should fall thus suddenly and unreasonably in love.

Hitherto he had never, as he had thought, met with any woman sufficiently worthy of his esteem to excite the passions. Who could love where they did not esteem—and esteem with good reason?

Who, indeed ?

And now he had fallen before a face and a voice—was fascinated, enraptured, lost,—before he had exchanged a syllable ! So irretrievably lost, indeed, that he did not even wonder at his own infatuation—did not even question himself as to its source ; far less

inquire where was the indispensable esteem — where the qualities to justify such a passion. What did he know, what could he know—but that this sweet girl had the loveliest of forms and faces, and the most bewitching voice and manner in the world.

For the present he was as one entranced ; he cared not even to approach her ; all he desired was to be allowed to enjoy his darkened corner, and stand there watching her face.

It was a face well worth watching, it must be confessed, for varying expressions were for ever flitting over it, and the perfect *truth* of the countenance, the entire absence of all second thought, affectation, or self-occupation, rendered every expression in its turn interesting.

But how far more than beautiful that face became, as she listened to a conversation which just then began close behind her—how it lightened up with fervour, with enthusiasm ! how the eye thrilled, and the colour rose !

She was only listening to two old men in naval uniforms, covered with decorations, that stood conversing behind her, and there-

fore the admiration of William Aubrey was not on that account distracted by jealousy. They were not very formidable rivals, these two grey-haired veterans, to whom she was giving such undivided attention.

These were some of the words she caught. “ It is, take it altogether, the most brilliant action of the war—Such a youngster, too!—not even a commander!—But for coolness, judgment, heroic bravery, and that sort of enthusiastic ardour which electrifies your men—this young fellow is without a parallel —now, at least;”—and a sigh was given to the memory of Nelson, as the speaker paused.

“ Young is he? How old should you say? ”

“ Well, I said young—may be two or three and twenty—may be less—he’s a handsome lad, but he has seen a good deal of service—Looks older than he is at times—when his brow is thoughtful, or his blood up—at others, he is the gayest, most careless, thoughtless being in the world.”

“ I admired the conclusion of the story most of all, Admiral,” said a third gentleman dressed in plain clothes, who now joined in

the conversation ; “ the story of the dog—Was it not beautiful ? ”

The old sea-worn veteran smiled.

“ I don’t know,” he said. “ The skill displayed in the action was really astonishing—in such a lad, too. We seamen cannot help attaching the greatest value to that sort of thing.—Yet it *was* a pretty story, that of the dog—”

And his wrinkled, weather-beaten face betrayed, by its expression, how deeply and how much he had felt it.

“ The dog ! ” said the other naval man ; “ you told me nothing about a dog. Rather a curious individual to figure in a naval history like this—What of the dog ? ”

“ Oh ! tell the story again, Admiral, as you told it to me,” said the gentleman in plain clothes.

And the beautiful young creature, who had been listening long, but with her face directed the other way, now moved, and lifted up her eyes and fixed them upon the old Admiral. The three gentlemen, however, were too much occupied in their conversation to notice her.

This old Admiral had a particularly inte-

resting way of telling stories of the present description. There was so much simple feeling and sympathy for all that was generous and good in his heart. I despair of doing his little relation justice, but I will do my best, for it is a true story, and is attached to one of the most eminent men in our Navy.

Thus the Admiral began—

“ When the Frenchmen, after a merciless hard fight, had surrendered, as I told you, to this little insignificant witch of a brig—it was found, when they came to examine the captured vessel, that she was so much injured in the battle as to render it impossible to take her in tow—and, even had this not been the case, these Frenchmen so outnumbered my young lad’s squad, that to think of diminishing any of his own force, by putting them on board her, was out of the question. So it was resolved, that—taking her crew into their boats, in order to put them on board the brig—they should afterwards make for the nearest port, and leave the beautiful French vessel to her fate.

“ Sink, there was every appearance that she would—but to make all sure, they added a few

scuttle-holes of their own to finish the business.

“ My youngster you may be sure was on board of the French vessel all this time—seeing to everything, and, more especially to the security of his men and his prisoners, as the boats passed to and fro conveying the Frenchmen, and a few necessaries of theirs, to his own vessel—and in this he was assisted by the French Captain. A very gallant gentleman, who, though badly wounded, insisted upon remaining in the vessel to the last—and was busy in helping and consoling his men—many of them half cut to pieces—and all heart-broken at their disaster.

“ In the last boat that quitted the vessel—which seemed speedily about, as we say, to settle—this gentleman took his seat, followed by my young lieutenant—who sprung into the boat the very last man, ordering the sailors, as he did so, to push away for their life—as, indeed, it was high time they should.

“ But they had scarcely got a few yards from the vessel, before a cry, or rather a piteous howl, was heard from the deck—Upon which the French Captain started, turned

pale, and a cry of anguish, the first he had been heard to utter that whole day—burst, as it were, from his very heart, and the tears started into his eyes.

“‘What is it? what is the matter, sir?’ cried my young one anxiously—for you see, he had all along been very much struck with the gallant bearing and fortitude of the Frenchman.

“‘Oh, nothing, nothing,’ says the officer, shaking his head; the tears in his eyes, and at last fairly rolling down his cheeks. ‘Nothing, nothing,’ says he, ‘not to be thought of,’—making, however, as if he would fain throw himself into the water—but his wounds, poor gentleman, were grown stiff, and he could scarcely move hand or foot.

“‘Nothing! nothing! Pray tell me what can it be? Can it be the dog?’ following his eyes as they rested upon a little animal that was now running up and down the deck—now looking over the bulwarks, and giving signals of the utmost distress.

“‘It is an *insigne faiblesse*,’ says the Frenchman; ‘but it was *her* dog—my wife’s dog!—The dog she loved and gave to me as a

last legacy, when she lay a-dying, poor creature, with her new-born baby dead beside her—She bade me treasure it, and love it for her sake . . . And I forgot him!—I could forget him!' And with that, fairly covering his face with his hands, he sobbed aloud like a child.

“ ‘ Stop,’ cries my young fellow, ‘ Hold hard! ’—And with that he springs over the gunwale of the boat—he swims like a fish—and he was off like a shot, and by the ship’s side, and up upon the deck—and the little dog in his arms—and he in the water again, before you could say Jack Robinson. And sure enough, had but just time to reach the boat—which luckily lay too far off to be sucked in by the swell—when the French vessel gave a heave, and went down head foremost.

“ They blamed him,” added the Admiral, after a pause of general silence; “ they said he was mad to risk such a life as his for a Frenchman’s little dog.—He answered he did not consider much about it at the time, except to keep his men out of danger, and save the poor man’s dog—

“ He did not know whether he was right or

wrong—wrong, he supposed—but it was done—so let no more be said about it.”

Well, that young girl’s face, at this last speech, lighted up with something so excessively beautiful, as her bright eyes were all glistening with tears, that you never beheld anything to surpass, and seldom anything even to equal it; whilst William Aubrey’s heart beat so strangely that he was almost ill, and obliged to turn to a window for fresh air.

He did not hear one syllable of what had been said, nor did he want to hear.

He was a man of the extremest physical sensitiveness of nerve, and emotion of any kind shook him to quite a painful degree. He had always endeavoured to meet and vanquish this bodily weakness by the commanding power of his will—exercising himself in habits of fortitude and patience—accustoming himself to preserve the utmost calmness even upon occasions when people of far less real sensibility would have been overcome; but his present feelings were so altogether new, they had taken him so by surprise, that he was totally unprepared to deal with them—the insensibility of his heart

until now—seemed to make the present sentiment only the more intense.

He went and stood at an open window in a farther drawing-room, to refresh and recover himself—from which window, however, he could still at times watch her as the crowd moved to and fro, and opened and closed again.

And now a sort of general excitement and sensation might be observed to pervade the mixed multitude. All eyes appeared to be directed one way, and that way was towards the large door which opened upon the staircase.

Several gentlemen were coming up together.

There had been a great dinner given at the United Service Club to celebrate the gallant action of a very young Captain and Commander — which our above-mentioned Lieutenant had become, young as were his years—for his action had been beyond praise, and moreover—

Mark that, good reader—

His father was a very, very rich man, and powerful, and well known, though not of any

very high, merely of what is called a respectable family.

These gentlemen that were coming up had just left this great dinner, and they were all in very good spirits, for the dinner had gone off remarkably well, and so they entered—a cheering, pleasant company of agreeable faces, young and old. Some in uniforms, for it had been a levee day; some in plain clothes—all crowding together. In the midst there was seen a charming-looking young man, of slight figure, rather under the middle size, with light hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, and one of those countenances which, once seen, are never to be forgotten.

This pleasing-looking young man was Edward Aubrey — the hero of the old Admiral's tale—and the hero of the day—and the twin brother of William, who stands at the distant window.

A fashionably-dressed, remarkably handsome young man—who looked much of the same age with Edward Aubrey, though he had already a certain air of man of the world, if I may so speak, which the other did not seem yet to have attained---followed close

upon the rear of the young officer as he entered the room; and no sooner was he fairly in, than he put his glass to his eye and began peering and looking about him. Presently he put his hand through Edward's arm, and said, “I'm looking about for all the prettiest girls to make you acquainted with, Edward—but the beauty of beauties—the pearl beyond price, is my sister; and where is she?” looking round a little while, “Oh! oh! I spy—Come along; let me present you at once.”

And so saying he led the young Captain back to the settee where his sister, the Lady Emma, sat in all and more than her usual beauty, and her eyelashes still moist with the tears which had gushed up at the story of the dog.

Oh, such a sweet glory of an April morn as was that face just then.

How she started, and rose up, and held out her hand, drew it back again, colouring like a rose, and sat down looking a little ashamed; and how he, flattered and amazed at the sight of so much beauty and so sweet an emotion, stammered, and bungled, and coloured too; and how, if Lord Algernon had not laughed

merrily and good-humouredly, and set them both at ease, they might have been troubled and uncomfortable all the evening, I need not enlarge upon. But Lord Algernon's ready laugh and his ease soon made them both feel more comfortable, and the three began to talk pleasantly together. Edward with his hand leaning upon the arm of the settee, drawing himself a little back modestly; and Lord Algernon standing full front and chattering away with his sister—for he was a great talker; and she lifting up her eyes first to her brother, and laughing a little, and then softly in a shy, sweet way glancing at the stranger, as he spoke in a lower voice, but in a still more natural and pleasant manner than his companion.

She looking so surpassingly lovely all the time.

But felicity such as this is not fated to last long in London parties, at least not for lions, and Mrs Lion-hunter is already at Edward Aubrey's side, and is saying in her most insinuating, flattering, and fascinating way :

“ Oh ! I must not let even dear, beautiful Lady Emma absorb you altogether—you

know you are a species of public property this evening."

And so she dragged him away to be introduced to I don't know who, any more than he cared who.

The pale student had remained at the open window—feeling really unequal to encountering the heat of this excessively-crowded room again. He had stood there watching the sweet countenance of the Lady Emma with feelings of unmixed delight, the delight of the highest and fondest admiration, before jealousy, or distrust, future hopes or future despair, have all blurred over and confused the picture—he had watched her look of animated excitement, as she listened to the discourse of the two elderly gentlemen; and as he had not the most distant idea of the subject matter of the conversation, it was impossible, as I said, he should feel the slightest twinge of jealousy on account of those two hoary veterans—

But now the little bustle at the door lead-

ing to the staircase had excited his attention, and through the waving crowd he had seen his brother Edward entering the room, surrounded and ushered in, as it were, in a sort of triumph by a crowd of brother officers and friends. A pang shot through him—yes, there was a pang; he hated himself for it; he always hated, he detested himself for such feelings; but it was an old sore; and these old sores of the heart are awful things.

Awful temptations—deep gulphs of misery!

A pang there was; and the pale cheek grew paler, and the dark eye more clouded, as it rested upon the gay, brilliant, and apparently thoughtless young fellow thus ushered in.

Brother, and more than brother!—twin brother!—alas! alas! that that which should have been as a double bond of love should, by the careless injustice of parents, have become only a source of deeper and bitterer jealousy!

William Aubrey at once passionately loved his brother; dreaded and envied; admired, yet censured, him. He acknowledged all his sweet engaging qualities; yet, in spite of Edward's innumerable fascinations, he felt,

and believed himself to be the superior; and his heart, from earliest childhood, had rankled with a sense of injustice towards himself.

These feelings, contrasted and strange as they were, seemed almost to have been born with him: he never could recollect the time when his heart had not, as it seemed, been poisoned with them, exasperated as they had been by the partiality of parents, who, heedless of the very first law of parental duty, had embittered the existence of one child by their undisguised partiality for the other—as they contrasted the warm, expansive character of Edward with that of the cold and shy reserve of a sensitive child—disliked for the very reserve and shyness which their distaste had contributed to create.

The boy so pale, so delicate, so fretful, so difficult to manage or to rear, appeared in truth to poor advantage by the side of the vigorous, high-spirited, generous lad, who had a heart for everybody,—father, mother, kinsmen, friends, but above all for his brother.

Instead of, as twins most often do, resembling each other in external feature and general disposition, in this case the very reverse had

happened. It would almost seem as if one infant had abstracted the vital essence from his brother. The one was far above the average in every physical perfection that can belong to a new-born child, the other seemed with difficulty even to breathe.

The beautiful vigorous baby, who was, moreover, the first-born, was taken to the mother's bosom, and the delicate puny infant, whom no one cared for, was, by the advice of the medical man, placed in the hands of a wet-nurse. Perhaps the medical man was right, medically speaking, for the mother was a young woman, gay and fashionable, and not inclined to sacrifice the world to the nursery ; but the result proved unfortunate. Unthinking, and wanting in all sound principle to guide her impulses, the mother yielded herself up to her partiality for the beautiful child, her own proper nursing, and spoke with indifference of the other, as a poor, little weeny thing that she was afraid she should never be brought to endure.

She felt no compunction at this partiality. She had little idea of duty, and never thought of considering that the first duty of a parent

is impartiality—most perseveringly to root out, and, if that be not altogether possible, sacredly to conceal any inclination to an undue preference of one child before another. Parental partiality! Oh, that is the injustice which drives the child to despair! all other partialities, all other inequalities, all other preferences may be endured; but this seems to penetrate into the sanctuary, to drive the young heart from its place of refuge—for in the security of the mother's love compensation is found for every other evil. When this fails, the shipwreck is fearful—and who shall say how much that is precious in that shipwreck for ever goes down?

People loved Edward for his beauty, his vigour, his spirit, his good humour, and were tempted almost to adore him for his affection for the less amiable brother; and, when that unhappy and embittered child would at times repulse any somewhat boisterous mark of affection, how shocked and disgusted they would feel! They pitied Edward at such times, and loved him all the more for their pity, for Edward had the tenderest of hearts; and, young as he was, would be hurt

even to tears at times ; and great was the sympathy he then inspired. But no one guessed, for no one cared to guess, no one sympathised with the intenser sufferings of the other, and no one observed or understood the sensitive delicacy of a temperament so unlike that possessed by any of his family. The father was a powerful man, the mother all health and spirits and gaiety, relations upon each side of the same constitution. William, alone, was a victim to that exquisite and most painful tenderness of nerve, caused by, or the cause of, an almost morbid sensibility of character,—a sensibility, however, in this, as in most instances, compensated by the possession of the rarest intellectual gifts.

Morbid sensibility of the nerves is, of course, the cause of frequent depression of spirits ; and the demon of the flesh, which in gayer and stronger natures assumes the more tempestuous forms of temptation, may, in these more delicate ones, be detected lurking like a venomous reptile amid the hidden recesses of the heart ; whispering the thousand base suggestions of fear, of envy, of jealousy,

of unreasonable anxiety—temptations against which we are as sedulously warned in that blessed code we are bound to obey, as against the more open and licentious vices.

But what mattered that code to them?

That code was as a dead letter in this family—an old forgotten law.

Neither William, nor Edward, had ever been taught to venerate, to study, or to form themselves upon that.

It was a matter of course in their father's household that everybody should go to Church on a Sunday morning, dine an hour earlier than customary upon that day, and have only a few intimate friends to dinner. But here ended the religious observances in the house of Aubrey, and everybody thought they had done all that was necessary. Many of their neighbours did much less,—conscience was quite at rest.

It never entered into the head of either Mr Aubrey, or of his wife, to doubt but that they were very good Christians.

CHAPTER III.

A sudden, subtle flame,
By veering passion fanned.—TENNYSON.

WE return from the somewhat long digression of the last chapter to the gay and crowded—the humming and buzzing apartments, where the twin brothers now are.

The one has drawn further back into the shadow of the window curtains, and his eye still follows the sort of triumphant entry, as I have called it, of the other—he who comes forward so charming-looking, so fresh, so easy, so gay, with his delightful countenance, his light, waving hair, and that indescribable look which seems to belong to accomplished naval men, and to them alone, and which is so winning to every beholder. And lo! he is brought up to the settee upon which sits the idol, the

divinity, the worshipped one of William's heart! She! the first—and he felt it would be the last—for whom that heart would ever tremble, and for which it was already sinking and dying. And the sweet smile, the lambent brightness of the eyes and countenance with which she receives him!

There was a strange sense of bitterness arising.

“But no,” a voice within him seemed to say, “this triumph he shall *not* achieve. *I* saw her first—*I* loved her first. He has supplanted me in all other things; he hath the birthright; I am a mere younger brother, though born of the same bed, in the same half-hour. One is a prince and the other a pariah. All *that* has been given up, of course, but this shall not be given up. I saw her first, I loved her first; brother Edward, *I bar that*.”

What folly!

As if it depended upon the *rights* of the matter, if rights they could be called, whether the joyous and victorious sailor, or the pale, melancholy student should best make his way to a fair woman's heart.

But he thought not of the absurdity ; he clung to, and hugged the idea that he had spied out and appropriated the treasure first ; that it was his—and that his brother should not supersede him.

There was little satisfaction in watching the Lady Emma now, and one of his occasional nervous headaches came on, so that the noise and heat of the room became very oppressive, and feeling dizzy—indeed, half distracted—he stole away without noticing his brother, who was not aware that he was in the room, and went down stairs and took his hat, and refusing the offer to call his cab, which he left for his servant to take his chance with, and come home when he was tired of waiting—he walked up Grosvenor Street, where all these fine doings were going on, and so to the fresh air of the park.

The night was glorious, the stars were shining like suns, the air calm and clear, the moon sinking behind the distant trees.

The fresh breeze saluted him as he approached the park, refreshing his fevered brow, and calling a faint colour into his wan and delicate cheek.

Nature looked so beautiful in its calm silence.

He had a poet's eye and heart, and he worshipped nature.

Till now this worship had been to him a source of his purest and most unmixed delight. His heart entirely free—his sensibility to beauty so keen—his imagination so fervent and bright, the loveliness of nature had been a sort of compensation for all other love. He looked upon her, and she seemed to look upon him with a certain tenderness. He felt himself her child—he, who had no other parent!

Morbid feelings these were, perhaps; but morbid or not, they were the sweetest of his life.

But now all is changed.

“Il faut l'amour ou la religion pour gouter la nature,” says Madame de Staél.

But love not only possesses the power to brighten and give interest to scenes of natural beauty; it has alas! another power—to deaden by contrast all other sensations but its own, rendering all stale, flat, and unprofitable in which it has no share—and therefore it is, that unrequited love is so fatal a bane of human

happiness; not only that the one source of exquisite felicity is dried up, but that with it all goes—that taken, all is taken, and life becomes a dreary, loveless wilderness, where no water is.

He was shocked at himself, when he perceived the change which had taken place in his feelings as he wandered over the grass and under the trees—his favourite solitudes at early morning, before the busy throng had stained their freshness.

Where was all this beauty now?

With her! the barest prison walls—the darkest and deepest dungeon would have been a paradise! without her, all creation would be as nothing.

Unaccountable effect of one brief half-hour.

One consolation he had, however; it was a fond, but it is a common superstition. The very intensity of this sudden passion seemed to him as a reason for its success—it was as something supernatural—something *sent*—sent to a purpose. What was so transcendent could not be without result. As was the greatness of his love so must be the greatness of his claim. The Lady Emma was his—

could only be his. It seemed as if nothing on earth could be strong enough to snatch her from him.

And he had not exchanged one word with her—had not even asked to be introduced.

While William in this manner beguiles his passion in the Park, Edward, in a much happier, though rather more commonplace way, is indulging his, by dancing with the lovely creature, of whom he was already, with a true seaman's heartiness, become the undisguisedly passionate admirer.

He had hesitated a moment through modesty, when the music struck up (for a little carpet dance was to conclude the evening); but the deep blue eyes glanced at him, almost expectingly, as he thought; so with an air of devotion the most sweet and engaging, he offered himself for her partner, and soon they were united in all the bright delirium of the dance.

Oh that young sailor's heart! how it bounded! how it overflowed with happiness!

Such pure downright happiness. He was not troubled with doubts and cares, not he.—He who thinks little, if ever, about himself, escapes that bane of present enjoyment. He was wrapt up in her. His admiration in fact knew no bounds, and he thought himself the most blessed and privileged fellow upon earth, to have come across such a divine beauty.

To dance with her till she was ready to faint for want of breath; to support, almost carry her to her seat; to hang over her and fan her; to fly, when fanning seemed vain, to a neighbouring window and let in the fresh air—to tremble lest the fresh air should be too cold for her—to catch up the lace shawl of some one thrown upon a chair near, and throw it over her—to ask what he should fetch her,—“iced water, wine,—what—” to be answered by those sweet, pleased smiles. With smiles of amusement and delight mingled. A little amusement at his assiduity, so unlike the ordinary staid attentions of young men of fashion—delight with all he said and did, but most of all with the adoration which beamed in his eyes, and found an

answer in her heart! so she responded to all this.

And the feelings of the heart were already giving a softness to her voice, a certain timid shyness to her manner, that rendered her more than ever irresistible.

She would not let him fetch her anything, but being a little recovered, said, that the noise of the cornet-à-piston, which certainly was now blowing furiously, made her head ache; and that she would go down to the refreshment room. So he offered his arm, which she took; and he led her along the room, and down the stairs, and every one who met them smiled with a sort of cordial sympathy; for every one seemed to feel that this young hero of the day, and the loveliest girl of the season, were well paired; and, besides, people knew, that Edward Aubrey was the heir of a very large fortune, and quite entitled by his social position to take a wife from among the fair daughters of the aristocracy.

Wife, fortune, or such things, he, as yet, thought not about, his soaring imagination was a flight far above that. Time enough

for such prosaic matters by-and-by, at present it was the love infinite which regards nothing but its object. To hand refreshments to her was now his pleasant task; and when that was done, she went and sat down upon a couch in a cool and shady part of the room, and he sat down by her.

And then a charming conversation began between the two; and she, who was all curiosity and interest about everything which concerned him, began to talk about the sea, and the dangers and excitements of a seaman's life; and to tell him about her brother Algernon; and how she loved him the best of all her brothers, because he was the sailor boy. Desdemona, my dear—remember *she* spoke almost too plainly, but in truth, your talk was as guileless as hers.

She loved Algernon the best of all her brothers, though she had seen little or nothing of him for the last four years. This war kept every one at sea, and when he did come on shore, he had usually spent his time in London—just running down now and then to see her and her sisters, who remained with the governess at the family place in Ireland, none

of them being introduced, for she was the elder by some years, and this was her first season in London.

It was now two years since she had seen Algernon, till just that very day, as she was coming down with her mother, dressed to go out to dinner; he ran into the house, saying he was that moment arrived, and ran out again almost as quickly, to find himself lodgings, where he could dress for the great dinner he was going to—one given at the United Service Club to Captain Aubrey, of the Seagull—"And that is the first time I heard your name mentioned," she said.

He bowed and coloured.

Then Lady Emma said,

"You and Algernon are great friends, are you not?"

He hesitated a little moment, and then he answered,

"I should pay myself too great a compliment, I fear, if I said that."

"How can you say so? How can your friendship be anything but an honour to any one?"

“ *Your* brother. Oh ! that is a different thing.”

“ How different ? I don’t understand,” she was about to say, but she stopped, coloured, and cast down her eyes.

She was prettier than ever ; lovely as her eyes were.

“ Since you do not think it presumptuous in me to claim the honour,” he said, looking at her with much tender admiration in his face ; “ since you do not think it presumptuous in me to claim the honour, I may say that Lord Algernon and I have been considerable allies whenever we have met, and I feel now —now I think—I hope—we may be called friends.”

And yet, whilst he said this, something within him said, “ No—acquaintance, familiar acquaintance, close allies if you will—but not friends !”

Lord Algernon was of about the same age as Edward, but, as I have told you, amazingly more practised in the ways of the world.

His parents, the Marquis and Marchioness of Hurstmonceaux, were commonplace worldly

people in their several ways—he, a needy and embarrassed Irish peer, hungering after money, and she, an uneasy mother, weighed down with the shifts and cares of pride, poverty, ambition, and many children.

Struggling after what might distinguish her as a leader of ton, and enable her in due time to establish her daughters—anything deserving the name of a right education,—the rearing a child in habits of religious principle and moral rectitude, had been quite out of the question in her family. The children were left to take their chance. Governesses such as they were sometimes had been, sometimes not, provided for the girls; the boys were sent mere children to school, there to take their chance. Lord Algernon, with whom we have chiefly to do, had early entered a very large private school, under a very severe master, who, thrash him as he might, could thrash no learning into this boy's incorrigible head; and whose severity only served to harden him to rebellion and the most daring defiance of every obligation, human and divine. From thence he had passed to one of our great public

schools, being at the time intended for the Church. There he had distinguished himself by his wildness and daring indifference to authority of every description, much to the admiration of most of his fellows, who thought all this prodigiously clever. He did not, indeed, want for parts, which the daring audacity of his character rendered dazzling in the eyes of a parcel of schoolboys, and which to a certain degree even blinded the masters to his faults. At last one of his exploits was of so glaring a nature that, son of a marquis as he was, and destined for the Church, and a very large family living, it was found necessary to expel him. Upon which he at once went to sea, and continued his wild career in every place, and upon every occasion, where the opportunity for excess and self-indulgence offered. This mad behaviour still rendered him but too brilliant and seductive in the eyes of his companions, and his superiors unfortunately found some compensation for his errors in his reckless bravery, cool resolution, and ready judgment upon all occasions which had called for the exhibition of such qualities.

Edward Aubrey's lately-acquired renown made him an object of attraction in every circle; and Lord Algernon, who in the midst of all his apparent wildness, ever kept an eye to the main chance, was ready enough to claim the acquaintance begun at sea, and to establish it at once upon a more intimate footing than Edward had understood it to be. But Edward was easy, careless, and good tempered; his head, perhaps, a little turned by his success, and he felt flattered by Lord Algernon's advances; partly as coming from a man of station superior to his own; partly because he was universally reckoned a very clever fellow; most of all because he was the brother of Lady Emma.

And now the party is about to break up; and the Marchioness comes to take her daughter away.

The two young men who had kept assiduously near her, attended the two down stairs, Lord Algernon giving his arm to the mother, and thus leaving the too happy Edward to attend upon the fair sister, and to enjoy the pleasure of all the little familiar chat and laugh which attends upon seeking

for a *sortie de balle* among heaps of shawls and wraps of all descriptions, and upon assisting to place it upon the beauteous shoulders, seeing the strings tied under the prettiest chin in the world, the blue eyes sparkling, the lips smiling, the manner so pleasant, so sweet, so winning all the while!

The young men placed the ladies in their carriage, the tall footman shouted “home,” jumped up into his comfortable seat on springs behind, and away they drive. A piece of humanity this same foot board on springs, by the way, which it is astonishing was not thought of sooner. But so it is with all humane inventions, when once they are adopted we shudder at the barbarity of which, whilst it was in practice, we never thought, and were partakers like the rest of the world. Who thought of the injury their footmen sustained upon the hard, rattling foot-board of old times? Let us look around and see what negligences of this sort still exist in our daily domestic arrangements.

“Home,” shouted the footman, and away drove the carriage, and Edward stood for a few moments bareheaded upon the steps,

watching it as it rolled down the street, and then he sighed, and turned into the house to seek his hat.

As he was preparing to cross the threshold, and depart, an arm was thrust through his.

“Whither bound?” said the voice of Lord Algernon.

“Why, home, I suppose.”

“Home! and at this time of night!—Why man, it’s not gone three yet.”

“Time for all sober people to be in bed,” said Edward, endeavouring to turn away.

He wanted to be alone with his own excited thoughts.

“Sober people!—granted—but to that category, I should opine, neither you nor I strictly belong.”

“I have always esteemed myself a model of sobriety,” said Edward, quietly, “at least, in comparison with your noble self; and to-night I have a head-ache, and shall go home.”

“A head-ache!—poor dear fellow—is that all? Something a good deal better or a good deal worse than that, I take it, is the matter. Pshaw! my good lad, you mistake the age you live in. Men don’t, in these our days, go about

mewling, and puking, and stealing home, when they have got anything the matter just here.—That's not the way to win a mistress in this our good nineteenth century.—The girls of these days study metaphysics and ride a fox-hunting—and like a dashing fellow in their hearts—and abhor a milksop—which you never were, Aubrey; so, for luck's sake, don't begin now."

"Come along with me," he rattled on, "to the Club—not that hum-drum United Service Club, Senior or Junior—but to a special little affair got up in a corner by a few choice spirits, with no old grey-beards to lay down the law.—Come along with me, and we'll have a morsel of supper, and toast a fair unknown, in hock or champagne of the prime—and maybe take a hand at picquet, or let that alone if we like better—Liberty Hall it is at this Phoenix of Clubs—this little jewel of the tribe. Every man doth what is right in his own eyes there—Come along!"

The invitation was tempting, for it was the brother of his charmer who gave it, so Edward suffered himself to be guided by Lord Algernon, who still leaned upon his

arm, until, after traversing various fashionable streets, they came to one a little out of the way, where this gambling house was situated —for neither more nor less was that, which Lord Algernon designated as Club.

The house was rather small, and of unpretending appearance outside, but within, it was replete with every imaginable luxury.

The furniture was of extreme elegance, no expense had been spared. The walls were hung with choice pictures, or what pretended at least to be, choice pictures. The *cuisine* was, to say the least of it, such as to far exceed the ordinary *recherche* and perfection thought indispensable for the Club world of the times we live in.

The company assembled in the drawing room which our young men entered, seemed chiefly to belong to the higher aristocratical circles, and most if not all quite young men—many almost boys. Of this company some were lounging half asleep upon the sofas—some dosing over newspapers—some, comfortably ensconced in arm chairs, were reading. There was no play going on in this drawing room—neither cards nor dice being

there allowed—but from behind door cases, hung with portières of rich embroidery, sounds might be heard which betrayed what was passing behind the scenes. Low murmuring discourse, as of men busily engaged at cards; and now and then the rattle of the dice-box; and now and then deep tones as of suppressed emotion; and now and then a sharp feverish laugh; and now and then a smothered oath.

It might have reminded one of that portal of hell, where stood Dante and listened to the fatal sounds that issued mingled from that drear empire.

Duri lamenti, ed alti guai.

But Lord Algernon left Aubrey no time to speculate upon the scene before him. He had ordered supper as they came up stairs and he now carried him down to what was called the coffee-room, in which numbers of small tables were arranged, at which young men were seen sitting alone, or in small parties. The two with whom we have to do were speedily engaged upon the most delicate and elegant little supper that could be well ima-

gined, and were pledging each other in the finest of wines to the fair unnamed—for neither lover nor brother, by a sort of instinct of respect and delicacy, chose that her name should be uttered within these precincts.

The supper over, Aubrey prepared to pay his share of the cost, but this Lord Algernon would not permit. He said that it was his business, and flung down, in his usual reckless manner, two or three pieces of gold, not condescending to wait for his change.

CHAPTER IV.

What time the mighty moon was gathering light,
Love paced the thymy plots of Paradise,
And all about him roll'd his lustrous eyes.—TENNYSON.

THE two young men did not go up stairs again that night. They strolled homewards together, and parted at the top of St James's street.

Edward Aubrey's way lay along Piccadilly, and by the Green Park.

The morning was by this time beginning to dawn, and in the eastern sky faint lines of light indicated the approaching day. His head was in a tumult, his temple veins beating with excitement. He could not bear the idea of going into a house, more especially to his father's house in Dover street, which, though large and handsome, was so closely pent up behind and in front—the front by

the narrow street, the back choked up with buildings. So he, too, turned towards the trees, and the green of the parks—their quiet and their freshness, and, entering the Green Park through the little iron gate, got into the long walk running eastward and westward. It was now totally deserted, he had it all to himself, and kept pacing up and down lost in the fond foolish fancies of a young romantic lover, and that lover, too, a sailor.

His dreams were delightful, but still more delightful than any dream was the one reality which he hugged to his heart. Lord Algernon had asked him to call upon him that day at his father's house in Regent's Park—the ostensible reason to plan a ride somewhere or other, no matter where.

No matter, indeed, he was to call at the house where Lady Emma lived, and henceforth the door of that house would be opened to him.

The clocks were striking five ere he be-thought himself of going home.

The two brothers met the next morning.

Edward was taking a late breakfast; his father had long ago finished his, and had been gone out an hour or two. William had breakfasted with Mr Aubrey, but he had not yet left the room; he was sitting buried in an arm chair reading, or seeming to read.

Late it was when Edward appeared, his face looking pale, and somewhat jaded—for, truth to tell, he had not closed his eyes that night, late as it was when he went to bed. His mind was in too great a state of excitement to allow him to sleep.

The young sailor, accustomed to an existence of contention with the elements, to the fresh and stirring life of winds and waves—seeking composure if his spirits were accidentally ruffled, by pacing his deck, gazing upon the mighty ocean below, upon the multitudinous stars above, imbibing, as it were, into his soul, the grandeur of the infinite—was quite bewildered in the whirl and confusion of this great Babylon where he now found himself, for the first time since he had been a mere boy.

His ideas were all in confusion—This

very idle, very pleasant, but altogether new, artificial life into which he was suddenly plunged, contrasted in every respect to the simple but strenuous existence in which he had been engaged, seemed at first quite to bewilder his senses. A little time and a little practice would, however, soon have accustomed him to it, and he would have learned to take matters as quietly as other young men of his acquaintance, had not the strong impulse of love, the tumults of that rare thing in a life of the great world, a genuine passion, interfered to perplex him still further.

Nothing could be less in harmony.

On board his ship the generous emotions with which his heart was swelling would have been all in unison with the grand and simple of nature around him; but with the noise, bustle, hurry, and trivial excitement of a London season, what had they to do?

Poor Edward! he knew not, as the French say, where to find himself. The mere nervous excitement he felt, would alone have been sufficient to deprive him of rest.

Not so with William.

William was still less of this world; but he knew it and understood it and all its littlenesses well—and, knowing, he disliked and despised it.

Both possessing superior talents, no two young men could be much more opposed in character than were these brothers. The one was formed for action and actual life, the other for contemplation, and the exercise of those loftier functions of thought and intellect which belong to a higher and purer world of light than that we see around us. Ardent and generous, Edward had achieved success and found happiness in that struggle with *facts*, which is the part of the hero—William had sought peace in the indulgence of that thoughtful, far-searching mind which is the universe of the poet and the philosopher. In this his subjective life he had found what he sought, until he was suddenly awakened as from a dreamy trance, to intense emotion,—to passionate reality,—by the unexpected sentiment which had taken entire possession of him.

That which threw the one brother into the regions of imagination and poetry, re-

vealed to the other the depths of real life.

But these feelings were not, as with Edward, the source of contradiction and confusion, of nervous excitement, and trembling disorder of faculty. Serious, earnest, refined, his sense of beauty most delicate, his imagination alive to that ideal which is poetry, before it has found words,—these new, deep, fervent feelings, were in harmony with the old life within, and only served to vivify and to glorify it.

His sharp fit of jealousy against his brother had speedily subsided. Something seemed to whisper within, that not for the gay, brave, somewhat thoughtless Edward, was this angel of loveliness destined, but for another and a more earnest heart. He did himself, perhaps, more than justice; but brilliant as was Edward, William ever felt himself to be the superior. *He* knew what was within himself; the delicacy of perception, the high imagination, the sound and strong intellect with which he had been endowed, and he felt, and perhaps truly, that the man so endowed, who does, indeed, love, loves as none

other can—and that such a love, and such a heart, is the noblest treasure woman can obtain.

He fancied he saw in the Lady Emma that assurance of her being one to estimate the value of such a treasure. That divine thing which was in, and about her seemed formed to harmonize, rather with the finer intellect, than with the handsomer and more dazzling man.

But was Edward even handsomer ? William looked into his glass. It was, perhaps, the first time in his life that he had ever done so with the intention of criticising his own personal appearance. One does not look to advantage inspecting oneself thus. Suffice it to say, he was surprised—pleased and surprised at once, at what he saw.

There was a something—not greater beauty certainly—but a something which he felt Edward never did, nor could possess. So his jealousy had vanished like an ugly night dream, and he was prepared to be just as cordial with his brother as ever. Cordial he always was; nevertheless, to say the truth, William did not after all love Edward very

much. Characters of his stamp are, I think, not very much given to strong, mere natural affection, as it is called. Their sympathies are less the result of accident than of choice. They are probably too nice in their perceptions—too fastidious perhaps to attach themselves very warmly to those relations which nature, or accident, have thrown in their way, and Edward was not a character very strongly to interest his brother—interesting and dear as he was found to be by most people.

Edward, on the contrary, loved William exceedingly. He acknowledged and rejoiced in his brother's superiority of intellect—thought himself the luckiest fellow in the world to be connected with such a man—boasted of his acquirements, gloried in his success at college—in the splendour of his intellect, and the powers of his understanding, and gladly, joyfully, “knocked under,” as his phrase was, to the superiority he appreciated so highly.

But to return. Here he comes at last to his very late breakfast, looking and feeling very jaded and uncomfortable, yet with a sort

of secret joy dancing in his eyes, “for is he not to call at her father’s house that day?”

William lifted up his head from his book.

“ You are late this morning, Edward,” said he.

“ Very.—What o’clock is it? I did not come in till five last night.”

William shook his head.

“ My father does not like such hours, Edward. I am afraid you must contrive to be a little earlier in—or at least a little earlier down. You are a prodigious favourite, as you well know; but my father has his little peculiarities—I think they have grown upon him of late—and nothing annoys him more than irregular hours.”

“ Well, but, William,” said Edward, sitting down to the uncomfortable ruin of a breakfast, and pouring himself out a cold cup of coffee, “you must be reasonable.—One does not come on shore, after five years spent at sea, to use oneself to another man’s idea of hours—and go to bed when it strikes nine.”

“ Don’t drink that cold stuff,” said William,

ringing the bell. “At the risk of our good father’s displeasure, I have ordered some hot coffee to be kept ready for you.”

“Thank you—but displeasure!—You don’t mean to say that he was really displeased.

“Well, *displeased* is a strong term, as applied to you and him.—It would be difficult for you to displease him. But *annoy*—and you would not like to annoy him.”

“No, certainly; but there is reason in all things. I can *not* be a prisoner, Will. It’s against my very nature. I’d rather be a galley slave at once, than be bound down with this sort of domestic chain.—My father is so good—so kind to me, that to vex him would be a constant torment of remorse—and yet, to be a good boy, and come home just when I ought, and not to do this, and not to do that—not to have my swing when I am swinging—I declare to you again, I would rather be bound by real chains, that I could swear at, and perhaps, break asunder—than carry these tender fetters, soft though they be—fetters which it would be unnatural to swear at, and impious to break!”

And he began, somewhat impatiently, to

swallow large pieces of icy cold toast and butter.

William once more dropped his eyes upon his book, seeming to read, whilst Edward tossed down the hot coffee which a servant brought in; then he looked at his watch, and with a “Who would have thought it had been so late?” ordered his horse.

“It is late,” said William; “and just give me leave, Edward—my father—”

“*Our* father, if you please, William.”

“*Our* father—I beg your pardon. It is the common way of expressing oneself—*our* father, then, dotes upon you—I use the vulgar phrase, for really I cannot find any other that so completely expresses the thing I mean. He is excessively proud of what you have done—what father would not?—But, moreover, you are, as you must well know, peculiarly his son—You are his heir. Every man looks upon his heir as doubly his son; and in all probability, and not quite unreasonably—he expects his son and heir to look upon him as more than ordinarily his father. Now—all the forenoon you are rushing about town, nobody knows where—and all the afternoon you are on horse-

back—and you dine out every day, unless there is a party at home,—and my father is in bed long before you come in—so, if you do not appear at breakfast, when is he to see you?

Edward's face, which had looked a little vexed and out of humour at first, gradually assumed such a sweet, cordial expression, as his brother went on speaking, that had you been there, you would have been ready to dote too.

“Dear William,” he cried, “what a selfish, thoughtless wretch you make me out to be!”

“Hard words,” his brother answered, and smiled—smiled in a more affectionate manner than was usual with him, for Edward was irresistible when moved by sudden emotion; his feelings were so genuine and so good.

“Hard words you apply to yourself, Edward—harder than I should ever be tempted to use, were you a thousand times more thoughtless than perhaps you are—or selfish than you certainly are *not*—But, recollect, I warn you—Have a care. My father—our father—is a singular sort of man. To common observers he may appear, and he does appear, much like other commercial men who have wealth and leisure enough to assume

the gentleman—according to their idea of such beings—but the world in general know him as little as he knows himself. He has led such an active, bustling life, that he has had little time for reflection—not much for feeling.—When circumstances urge a man on so rapidly, there is scarcely a pause left for feeling.—Nothing but a complete break-down—something quite out of the common course—crossing, and, as it were, interrupting the current of a man's life, and occasioning a sort of stand-still in existence—when the man lives to and in himself—learns first to know himself—can call forth the deep utterances of the soul.—Many men die, leaving the scene, without having once given witness of what is within.—God grant that my father may do the same—for his awaking from the dream in which he lives might be awful."

Edward had tossed off another cup of coffee whilst his brother was thus discoursing, rather as if thinking aloud, than as addressing another. He now rose and came to the fire, and stood there, leaning with his back against

the chimney-piece, and looking attentively at his brother.

William was silent, and his eyes were fixed again upon his book.

Edward was silent, too, for some time. At last he said,

“Have a care!—Have a care of what?”

“Of offending him,” answered his brother, without lifting up his head.

“I hope I am incapable of doing anything that *ought* to offend him—and *I* never saw that in him which would lead me to suppose that he would take offence unjustly and without reason.”

“Perhaps not.—But he may be unjust and unreasonable in the degree to which he carries out offended feelings, in themselves perhaps not ungrounded.”

“But I don’t intend—I hope it is impossible that I can intend—to give cause for any well-grounded anger—for certainly I should not call his anger well grounded because I asserted my liberty of action.—That liberty, William, which you know as well as I know, lies after a certain age at the foundation of all manly character, and the right to which

you assert as decidedly as I do—or you would not be the man I take you for."

"Well, well—think upon what I have said, and be in time for breakfast to-morrow morning."

"But, do you know, that what you say half inclines me to assert my independence, and stay away."

"I did not think you had still so much of the child in you."

"For child, read fool," said Edward, again recovering his good humour; "but the worst of it is," he added, sitting down by his brother, "the unfortunate part of all misunderstandings between fathers and sons, as I conceive this matter to be, lies—in these cursed relations of money. Sons are unreasonable, and want too much—fathers are niggardly, and give too little. ... The balance between age and youth can rarely be struck with fairness—but there is far worse than that—Such petty dissatisfactions don't reach the pith of the matter.—The worst is, that every thought and feeling is perverted by the fear of being actuated, or thought to be actuated, by base motives of self-interest.—I declare I could

sacrifice every enjoyment—give up the assertion of my dear liberty of action for ever—where it not that my so doing might secure . . . I hate to think of it—other things besides the *affection* of my father.”

“Over-refiner,” said William. “Nonsense! —forgive me for saying so—but what have you to gain or lose?—You know everything he has in the world, except my share in my mother’s settlement, he has given to you—and you know well, or, at least, I know well, that happen what might—No, no;—that is saying to much—it would take a great deal—it would be hard matter for you to offend him.—But once do it—and his anger would be like his love—extravagant as that is illimitable.—Therefore, have a care.”

“Well, I’ll be down at his breakfast to-morrow, but now”—getting up and going to the window—“I must look out for my horses, for I protest it is going hard upon two o’clock—and at half-past, I promised to join Algernon—”

“Algernon!” repeated William, looking suddenly up.

“Not Algernon Sidney,” said Edward,

laughing, “you need not look so excited, William—no Algernon Sidney restored to earth for the benefit of you hero worshippers—but a very different sort of person I can assure you,—Algernon Mordaunt, in short, the wildest young fellow in existence at times—or as grave and staid as yourself when so it pleaseth him.”

“I have heard of him, Edward.—He is a person, already somewhat too notorious, for his name to have escaped even one so much out of the world as I am.”

“Notorious! That means celebrity in an evil sense, you anatomisers of words would, I suppose, tell us. I know no particular harm in him—do you?—I do not think I have any very great liking to him.—True, he and I appear to take life much in the same way—and do so, as far as the mere surface of things lies—but there is much in me that I should never tell him—and which he would laugh at and not understand if I did.”

“So I should think, indeed.”

“But I like him well enough—and we wanderers upon the ocean cannot afford to be very particular in our companionships. We

must take up with what comes—So I took up with him in the Levant. He was far the best of the set we had there, in spite of his faults.—But I never much cared for the honour of his acquaintance until last night, and then—” and a fine colour flew to his cheek,—“ I own I was very glad that I knew him.”

“ As how?”

“ He is the brother of Lady Emma.”

“ Lady Emma! Who is Lady Emma?”

“ Oh! the finest creature upon the face of the earth—one that he introduced me to last night—his sister—daughter to the Marquis of Hurstmonceaux. Emma—Lady Emma—She was sitting upon a little settee, in the most lovely attitude eyes ever beheld, and she rose at the introduction—and oh, William! I was fool and puppy enough to read a certain sweet confusion in her eyes, and a trembling in her voice—as if I was not just like a new, every day acquaintance to her. Laurels! They may cover me over—me unworthy—with laurels. I would barter them all for this little sprig of myrtle,” and he laughed joyously, almost triumphantly.

William looked at him from under the half-closed eye-lid. That eye! It looked at the moment like the eye of a serpent, it was so cruel—an evil eye.

For a pang of jealousy more bitter than a serpent's tooth, had shot through his heart, and seemed to turn his whole nature into gall—to venom rather, I should say.

His feelings for bad or for good were dangerously intense. His sufferings under mortal pain of any sort, so sharply excessive, that jealousy and love were to him torments, such as we read of in the appalling histories of the old, old world, but such as we little expect to meet with now-a-days.

He turned pale—he turned black.

Edward sat gazing into the fire. He had relapsed into silence after that short outburst of joyous laughter, and he sat musing; his mind teeming with happy, loving thoughts; absorbed in the present fulness of his joy; thinking little of, and certainly having little apprehension as regarded the future.

His had been such a life of uninterrupted prosperity, that to be frustrated in his wishes, appeared as unnatural and impossible to him,

as to some, alas, it appears, to succeed in theirs.

William, on the contrary, had little reason, from the unjoyous course of his own life, to expect much from fate. Yet, strange to say, in this instance he *did* rely upon it, and with a security which took to his mind the appearance of a fatality. Accustomed to observe himself as well as others, he could in no other way account for this strong prevision or presentiment—call it what you will—which assured him that the inappreciable prize was destined to be his—and with him jealousy already took rather the form of that of an affianced man, unjustly disturbed in the possession of his treasure, than of a rival contending with a rival upon equal terms.

William knew himself pretty well; yet he was not aware at this moment of the source from which his feelings of assurance and security sprung—he attributed them to fatality—that fatality is the fatality of the strong man—a determined will.

A determined will is as a spiritual magnetism, subduing all things to itself.

“What’s the matter with you, William?”

cried Edward, turning suddenly round, and perceiving the change in his brother's countenance, "what on earth can be the matter with you?—You look almost black; I should rather say—yellow green."

And he laughed again, and then more seriously added :

"Really, brother, I am afraid you are ill; and yet you don't look so much ill as odd—angry, rather, I should say—if there were anything to make you angry."

"I am neither ill nor angry," answered William, coldly.

"Well, you are uneasy, then, I suppose—Is it upon my account, brother? I have often observed that nobody can fall in love but it puts everybody else out of humour, and every bystander has some reason or other for abusing it.—Now, do speak out—But really, what possible objection can there be to my falling in love?—Nay," for now his thoughts began to travel far, "to my offering my hand and my heart to Lady Emma Mordaunt."

"None in the least, if she will accept them."

"And why should she not?—I a'nt a very ugly fellow; and I bear my blushing honours

thick around me—and, I assure you, she did not look as if she hated me altogether—and then—as to her friends—I am my father's eldest son and heir—and I shall have the fortune of a prince—and the Marquis, it is said, is not over rich, and there is an immense family of children, and so—and so—I am not going to be down-hearted about the matter, but mean to set to with all my might, and conquer or die in the attempt."

William shuddered as if struck with a sudden chill, as if some one were walking over his grave—*a grave*.

"Well, you are a strange fellow; I can but half understand you," said Edward, "I never saw such a face as your's was just now. It was as if you had suddenly put on a hideous tragic mask. If we were at this moment between the tropics, I should say you had been suddenly stricken with the plague—but I'm no doctor; and here come my horses.—Seriously though, William," he added kindly, as he rose to go, "if I were you, and I did not feel better soon, I would send for a doctor, for you look indeed very bad."

And, so saying, he left the room.

Opening the door, again, he looked in, and said:

“But I never told you what a lucky dog I was—I am going with Algernon to call at the Marquis of Hurstmonceaux’s—So consider me as a lost man.”

CHAPTER IV.

But not a voice replied ; no answer came from the darkness.
And when the echoes had ceased, like a sense of pain was the silence.—LONGFELLOW.

“No—no—no.

“She is mine, not his.

“Such love as mine!—such love as his!

“Can there be a doubt?

“Do not all women love because they are loved?—and what woman can resist the intensity of a love like mine?

“Let him flutter about her ; let him do his best, his worst ; he shall not, nay, he dare not. If he were once to know what passes in this heart—the agonies, the fierce paroxysms of which it is capable—he dare not—He dare as soon send a pistol bullet through my brain, as drive the poignard in !

“No—I care not.

“I shall seek no introduction at present; I want no introduction. A meeting under the common vulgar arrangements of the great world’s life, I do not want, and could not bear; but I shall get to her some way. It will come, sooner or later it will come, and she will be mine—

“Mine!—

“And what did he say last?

“What had he the cruelty to say?

“That he was assured of success because he was the heir?

“He would buy her, then.

“Purchase that heart, more precious than the chrysolite, with his gold—Yet, stay, not so—It was her parents that were to be thus bribed—but that I envy him not; I would not owe the possession of one lovely auburn tress upon her head to gold!

“She must love me for myself—only for myself—or, dear as she is, she is not for me.”

Alnaschar!

He spurned in fancy at the daughter of the Grand Vizir.

In this wild manner, the man of thought, the man of such mental power and force of

character, kept talking to himself, until at length exhausted with, and half ashamed of his over excited thoughts, he rose from his seat, resolving to go into the Park and get a little fresh air.

To the Park he went, and walked by the side of Rotten Row, and amused himself with watching the equestrians, young and old men, and slight, pretty girls, that were killing the morning, pacing up and down there. Girls do not, in my opinion, look particularly well on horseback—it requires a certain peculiar spirit to sympathise with the horse, to ride easily and well, in order to look as charming and agreeable as when otherwise engaged.

Very few of the young lady equestrians riding that morning fulfilled these conditions; and William, who now began to be an observer of young ladies, saw nothing much to please him. When lo! three horses were seen advancing; the party consisting of two gentlemen, and one young lady.

The gentlemen rode but very indifferently; they evidently were not particularly accomplished horsemen, but with the young lady it was different. She sat her horse with

the most easy grace, and there was a charming expression of enjoyment in her face, over which a sweet westerly wind was blowing, lifting the tresses of her beautiful hair, and giving a bright glow of health to the countenance.

She had been but too lovely as he had seen her the night before, in her evening full dress, but she was infinitely more charming now. Then she had appeared to him as the dazzling inhabitant of a higher world, and he had felt inclined to worship her as a divinity, but he saw her now in a far dearer light—as a sweet young girl—a sweet, lively, natural, laughing girl.

And he turned paler than ever.

She was talking gaily to both her companions, first addressing one and then the other, and William, who was beginning, with a strange instinct, to grow knowing in the affairs of the heart, perceived with joy, how openly and unaffectedly she smiled upon and chatted with Edward, and then turned away to laugh with her brother; whilst her beautiful horse, as if proud of his burden, pranced and curvetted beneath her, with arching

neck and hoofs so daintily touching, as scarcely to touch the ground, and she yielding easily to every motion as if horse and rider had been but one.

And so the little group passed and repassed several times; at a pace with which William easily kept up, as he walked along the path and watched them.

At length he overheard a few words as they approached the side where he was, and the voice was that of Lord Algernon; he was telling his sister that now she must go home, "for," he said, "there were certain calls to be made and engagements that he must keep," and he yawned as he spoke,—for he was one who liked not to be put out of his way, and whose apparent good-nature was speedily exhausted; and he was beginning to be tired of playing chaperon to his pretty sister and his friend, and wanted to be somewhere else where he might act principal himself.

So they turned their horses' heads, and went down Rotten Row, intending to leave the Park by Stanhope Gate. A considerable crowd was collected there at the time, and the horses got separated a little, the

two gentlemen proceeding first and the young lady following a little way behind, having been unavoidably delayed by the press. But just as she was about to pass through the gate, a carriage at full speed, drawn by a couple of furious horses, whom the coachman was vainly endeavouring to hold in, came dashing past and, at such a rate that she must have been inevitably upset, had not a strong hand seized hold of her bridle, and forcibly pushing back her horse—almost throwing him upon his haunches—rescued her.

The carriage rushed on, and so near was it, that the wheel just grazed her horse's head as it passed like a whirlwind by.

There is always something fearful in a narrow escape, and the young lady turned very pale and trembled so violently that she could scarcely sit her horse. The animal, too, was shuddering and quivering and evidently in extreme terror.

In the meantime, the gentleman who had seized the bridle continued to retain it, patting and endeavouring to soothe the terrified horse with words and caresses, but he did not look up at the young rider. He

seemed anxiously providing for her safety by quieting the animal, but he looked not up at herself.

Reader, did you ever know what it is to dally with a letter—some long-expected letter—bearer of tidings of blessedness unutterable. How the heart plays with itself, and will not break the seal for very joy. The moment of expectation is so sweet, the security of certainty so exquisite, that we love to prolong it—to rest, as it were, upon that, before rushing into the full tide of overwhelming happinesss.

Thus it was with William Aubrey.

The time was then come—the inevitable moment—that moment which he had felt assured would sooner or later arrive—he held the bridle of her horse, he had saved her life. He was privileged to look up, to gaze, to speak, released from chilling, conventional forms. Nature and circumstance had brought them together—one of those circumstances of terror and emergency had occurred which break down custom and restore us for a moment to nature's primitive freedom,—but he paused. He delayed to taste the fulness of his joy; his

heart was already so overflowing with emotion that it almost choked him.

But a fair head was now bent down to him as there he stood, still holding the bridle, and a sweet voice faltering with recent terror, uttered these words :

“ I thank you very much, sir. You have saved my life.”

Then he looked up and their eyes met, and the expression that was in his seemed to penetrate her very soul.

A strange feeling it was—of terror—of fatality !

She turned a little pale, and then a little red, and made as if she would have withdrawn her bridle from his grasp, but he said quietly :

“ I think your horse is too much frightened —you had better let me lead him through the gate and accompany you till you rejoin your companions, one of whom is my brother. —Oh, here they are !”

The two men were riding up in haste, both looking vexed at themselves for their momentary inattention.

Lord Algernon, as is usual with men of

his temper, vexed with every one else besides.

“What the deuce, Emma, have you been about? and what are you doing?” and he glanced angrily, first at her, and then still more angrily at her companion. Her companion, however, kept his ground, still holding her bridle and still soothing and caressing the trembling horse.

“It is Captain Aubrey’s brother,” said Lady Emma, in a low voice.

“But how comes all this to pass? And what have you been about?”

“He has saved my life, I believe—You have saved my life, I am sure;” again bending down to him. “May I introduce you to my brother?—This is my brother Algernon. Mr Aubrey—did not you say you were Mr Aubrey?”

Lord Algernon gave a somewhat stiff bow—anything but grateful felt he—his sister had got into some awkward scrape and laid him under an obligation. He hated scrapes and detested obligations. Lady Emma felt annoyed at his manner, and her voice trembled a little as she added :

“ I was in the greatest danger, and Mr Aubrey saved my life—perhaps at the risk of his own.”

“ I ran no manner of risk,” William said simply.

In spite of Lord Algernon’s looks he still kept hold of the bridle.

In the mean time, Captain Aubrey had flung himself from his horse, and had come forward holding him by the rein; but the animal pulled and pranced, and he could with difficulty get towards Emma. William was the first to perceive this.

“ Keep back, Edward,” he said, with authority, “ your horse is so unmanageable, that it may do mischief here—better mount again, and keep him in order.”

Captain Aubrey answered by throwing the rein to a lad who was passing by, and he was at Lady Emma’s side in an instant.

“ What has been the matter? What has happened?” he cried, trembling with anxiety.

“ It was an overdriven carriage, through the gate—Mr Aubrey—he is your brother, I believe,—was just in time to save me.”

Edward looked at his brother gratefully,

and said in a low tone which reached only William's ear, "God bless you for this!"

He envied him, oh, how he envied him for having saved his darling, but it was a generous envy. As for being jealous, the idea entered not his head.

"I see no use in staying here all day," Lord Algernon now somewhat rudely broke in. "Can't you manage your horse yourself, Emma, and let us go home?"

"If you will take my advice, my lord," said William, "you will let me lead the animal through the streets. It has evidently been dreadfully frightened, and seems inclined to start and shudder at every noise."

"Let *me* do that," cried Edward, endeavouring to lay hold of the rein.

"No—" putting his hand back, as one who had a right to decide upon what should be done—and he felt he had a right, the life he had saved, was it not henceforth *his*? "No, your vocation is not exactly the stable, Edward, and I doubt whether I shall not in this case prove the better esquire. Shall we go?" appealing to Lord Algernon.

"By all means, if you please."

So Edward, a good deal mortified, and inclined, for the first time in his life, to quarrel with his brother, remounted his steed, and followed at rather a sulky distance; whilst William quietly led Lady Emma's horse through the streets, preceded by Lord Algernon, who troubled himself not once to look back and see how they were going on.

They had to go through many streets, for the Marquis of Hurstmonceaux's house was one of those large palaces placed among the groves and lawns of the Regent's Park.

At last they arrived, the horses stopped, servants appeared, and Lady Emma was assisted to dismount.

She had kept up her courage pretty well until then, but no sooner did her foot touch the earth, than she felt dizzy and sick, and she reeled and would have fallen, had not William Aubrey caught her upon his arm.

Lord Algernon was dismounting from his horse; Edward was disentangling himself—for that is the proper phrase—from his, so William Aubrey had the advantage again, and before the two other young men were at liberty, he with Lady Emma on his arm, was

mounting the high flight of steps which led to her father's hall door.

Here, just as they were crossing the threshold, the two others joined them ; but not before her eyes had again met his deep passionate gaze, — that look with so strange a power in it.

Lord Algernon had recovered his good humour by this time ; and, with his good temper, his good manners were restored ; which, young aristocrat though he was, were sadly to seek whenever he happened to be — as he very often did happen to be — out of sorts ; so he courteously came up to William Aubrey, and thanked him for the service he had done, and desired to relieve him from further trouble, as he phrased it. He sent for his sister's maid, and consigning her to the attendant's care, asked William to come up to the drawing room, “ In order that I may present you to my mother,” he added.

William Aubrey, whose feelings were in a strange state by this time, most unwillingly yielded his charge to her brother's hands, but there was no remedy. So Lady Emma, accompanied by her maid, tried to cross the hall, and go up stairs, but she tottered so

much that she could scarcely stand. And now, it was Edward's turn. He was frank and impetuous, and accustomed to dart forward to his object, be that object small or great, in a drawing room or upon the ocean, and so he rushed past his brother and her brother, without ceremony, and hurried towards Emma, crying—"You can scarcely stand, take my arm."

And she laid her arm within his, doing this so willingly, so confidingly, and lifting up her eyes towards his, with such a sweet and peaceful reliance written in them, and such a gentle, smile lighting up her languid face, that it was only too charming.

"Lean upon me—you don't lean upon me. Lean upon me," he kept saying in a low voice. That clear, manly voice of his was so inexpressibly sweet, when the tones were softened by emotion.—"You don't lean upon me."

And she did lean upon him; and her arm was closely pressed—pressed close to his heart; and she felt that heart beating so wildly. And again she looked up into his face, and there she met all that woman so

loves to meet—sincerity and devotion, and the high spirit of the man, subdued to utter tenderness. And yet the *man* was still there. Edward was not, as too many unfortunate lovers are, deprived of the power of making himself interesting or acceptable, by the very agitation arising from the force of his attachment. The spirit which had carried him through many of the great emergencies of life, and triumphed over difficulties which might have appalled the bravest, was softened and melted, but not overcome, by his present feelings.

They were of so generous and animating a nature !

There is a sympathetic instinct in these things. Emma, who possessed more than the usual share of such precious gifts, felt attached to Edward Aubrey by the sweetest feelings of love and reliance ; they seemed to understand each other at once.

You may see how it is, by the very attitude and expression of the two figures as you follow them, and, certainly, the power of “elective attraction” was exhibited, in its full perfection here. Observe them as they go up

the wide stairs together, having dropped the Abigail upon the way; who, being no longer wanted, had taken up her lady's hat, which had fallen upon the hall floor, and followed discreetly, at a little distance behind.

Edward and the young lady parted at the door which separated the gallery, at the head of the stairs, from the little side passage which led to Lady Emma's apartments, then, returning to the party he had left, the three young men entered the drawing-room together. In this apartment they found the Marchioness of Hurstmonceaux sitting bonnetted and cloaked, waiting for her carriage.

Lord Algernon immediately went up to her, ushering in, or rather pushing forwards, William Aubrey.

“ Mother, let me present Mr William Aubrey to you—brother to Captain Aubrey, whom I had the honour to introduce here an hour or two ago, as so distinguished by his actions at sea. This present gentleman has a nearer claim upon your favour—inasmuch as he has achieved great actions by land—and has just saved your fair daughter, Lady Emma's life, by his daring bravery.”

“How! What do you say, Algernon?” exclaimed the Marchioness, without betraying any great emotion. However, she rose and returned the rather shy and reserved salute of William Aubrey, which followed upon Lord Algernon’s half ironical introduction. “I am sure I am extremely indebted to you, sir, but,” turning to her son, “pray tell me how it all came to pass.”

And with the instinctive dread of younger sons proper to prudent mothers, as she spoke, she cast an anxious glance upon the new comer. The glance satisfied her. She mentally settled it with herself that there was little to be called attractive in the cold and somewhat repulsive countenance before her. It contrasted most unfavourably, or rather favourably, with the handsome, happy, animated aspect of his elder brother, who stood just behind him; and, she secretly rejoiced that for once the provoking course which nature is for ever taking in such matters, seemed reversed in her favour; for the elder brother, the heir to enormous wealth, was in this instance as superior to the younger in every personal endowment, as he was in other ad-

vantages. She gave vent to one sigh of relief and satisfaction, and then turned to William Aubrey with greater cordiality—thinking he looked delightfully biliary and disagreeable—and thanked him warmly for the service he had done.

“ Though what that is, I don’t know in the least,” concluded she.

“ Nor I either,” cried Lord Algernon, breaking into a laugh, “ only we found Emma and her horse, both of them in a great mess—trembling and shaking—half out of their senses with fright—and Mr Aubrey holding the young lady’s bridle, and she crying, and saying, that he had saved her life—for which good office not only your ladyship, but half the town, will be ready to cover him with laurels; for what could this London do just now without the beauteous Emma?”

“ I am sure I thank you exceedingly, sir,” began the Marchioness; “ but how was it?”

“ The merest trifle, madam. A carriage with runaway horses, dashing through Stanhope Gate, just as Lady Emma was quitting the Park.—The sum of my merits amounts merely to this, that I happened to be stand-

ing there—laid hold of the bridle—and pushed the horse out of the way.”

“How romantic girls are!” cried Lord Algernon; “Emma would have it that her life had been saved at the risk of the gentleman’s own.”

“That makes no difference in our obligation to Mr Aubrey,” said the Marchioness politely. “But what were Captain Aubrey and Lord Algernon Mordaunt doing all the time?” she said, turning to Edward and smiling upon him.

“I am ashamed to say—quite ashamed, Madam!” cried Edward. “We seamen are such awkward brutes, especially on horseback—I was as helpless as a child.—If it had not been for William, I do not know what would have become of us.—Such a horrible, horrible business! It makes one shudder to think of it.”

“Say no more, Edward, I beg;” his brother began with a good deal of impatience; “the whole matter was the veriest—the most insignificant trifle . . . except as regarded Lady Emma’s safety,” he added.

“A rather important exception,” replied

the Marchioness, laughing. “However, all’s well that ends well; and I quite agree with Mr Aubrey, that the less said about such disagreeable things, and the sooner they are forgotten, the better. One consequence, however, will, I hope, be permanent—the pleasure of Mr Aubrey’s acquaintance. I have already given you a ticket, I think, for my ball, Captain Aubrey—Mr Aubrey will accept another. I shall be happy to see you both upon the 15th.”

A little more conversation in the usual style—the Marchioness’s carriage was announced, and the young men rose to go. They all three went down stairs together, but Lord Algernon was called back.

“Only just to bid you bring the elder one—Captain Aubrey, I mean—to dinner tomorrow. Eight o’clock; be punctual, I pray. Your father hates late hours.”

“And the other?”

“Oh, no need to ask the other; a card for my ball is quite acknowledgment enough of what he has done. But, Algernon,”—as he was making his way to the door—“you are

certain Captain Aubrey *is* the elder son; the other looks ten years older."

"Twin brothers; but I believe Edward is the elder."

"Only *believe*. What do you mean—Can there be any mistake?—Don't be foolish, Algernon. Tell me the truth at once—This is not a time for you to indulge your too absurd fondness for mystifying.... I say the other looks at least ten years older."

"Poor, dear mama! what a pass she is in," said Lord Algernon, going up to the Marchioness, and familiarly patting her cheek. "What *can* it matter which is the elder, when there is only half an hour between them?"

"Do you mean by this that Mr Aubrey's fortune is to be divided?—I thought it was all to go to the eldest son—*that* would alter things, indeed. In that case it would be but a plebeian fortune after all."

"It is not to be divided, ma'am, and it all goes to the eldest son—and it will be not a plebeian but a princely fortune—and put Emma up for sale when and where you will,

you will hardly get a better price for her, that I can assure you of, at least.—I know so much from unquestionable authority."

"But are you certain which of the two *is* the eldest son?" reiterated the mother, anxiously. "I cannot help having my doubts upon the matter."

"Why, I told you, did I not?"

"Yes; but you are so heedless, and he looks so much older."

"Well, then, go and ask his father."

"Provoking boy!"

"Nay, you won't believe *me*."

The Marchioness began to look vexed and angry.

"Now, what will you give me, mother mine," said he, coaxingly, "if I put you out of your pain?—Nothing for nothing is my maxim; and I am such a poor devil! and my lord is so needy, or so stingy—what is a fellow to do? I must have a thousand pounds on Thursday.—Will you get it for me?"

"Oh, Algernon! Algernon! where is this to end?"

"In a cannon-ball knocking my head off, I

suppose. But come, ma'am, be generous and be politic. Get this money for me, and I'll not only tell you which the eldest son is, but run him down for you—and Emma's as sure of him as ever deer-stalker was of his prey. Otherwise—mind, I promise nothing—I am forced to sell my services," he went on, with a harsh, careless laugh. "Service is no disgrace, though thieving is—and I must either serve, beg, or steal, and that's the long and short of it."

"Well, well, I'll see about it—but your father is hard-pushed just now."

"The more the necessity for you to secure a rich husband for Emma, and beware of mistakes—Things are just upon the balance between the two men at present. They are both in love with her; any fool may see that—and suppose you should encourage her to fall in with the wrong man! There would be a pretty commence."

"Algernon, you are too provoking—you are cruel."

"Mother, I am poor and penniless, and at my wits' end."

“ Well, well!”

“ Promise. Give me your hand upon it—a thousand pounds next Thursday, and the right man comes to dinner to-morrow.”

“ I promise—and here *is* my hand upon it; but you are a sad, sad, naughty boy.”

“ Thank, you, dear ma’m. Well, then, it’s all right, and the Captain’s the man.”

CHAPTER V.

Ah ! thou art young, and life is fresh and gay,
And thine eye glistens, and thy heart beats high ;
No fear to check, no tear to wipe away,
No retrospect to sadden with a sigh :
Strong in thy youth and happiness, beware.

MRS ACTON TINDAL.

THE two Aubrey's left the door together.

Edward was about to put his arm within William's and walk up the street with him. His heart was full ; he wanted to talk over his feelings with his brother and his friend.

But William shook the arm off.

“ What's the matter ? ” cried Edward, now for the first time perceiving the cloud upon William Aubrey's face. “ William, what *is* the matter with you ? My dear fellow, you look quite ill ; I hope you were not hurt in any way whilst saving that life—that life more precious than all in the Universe besides. I hope you were not hurt, dear fellow ; you look quite ill—won't you go home ? What *is* it ? ”

His brother made no answer. He only turned his face homewards. His heart was full of bitterness. Jealousy, that scourge of love, was converting his nature to gall. Once he turned round and looked at his brother, as if to satiate his soul with the cruel sense of his pre-eminent beauty and worth. For alas ! in addition to his other cruel feelings, there came upon him for the first time a sense of his brother's real superiority in worth—not intellectual it is true, but far better, moral worth.

This conviction had been brought home to him by the contrast between the generous confidence and affection of Edward and his own baseness, envy, almost hatred.—The conviction that this rival brother had the advantage not only as regarded the gifts of fortune, but that man to man he was his superior, pressed upon him for the first time in his life.

The wretched depression of his spirits as he thus thought, was almost insupportable. This conviction was one of those sudden unaccountable impressions which rush into the mind we know not whence or wherefore, and seem at once to change all its views and rela-

tions. A few hours ago, and William was exulting in the idea, that, however inferior in worldly prospects he might be, in all the higher qualities he was his brother's superior; and that the claim he so wildly and fiercely asserted to the possession of that sweet girl's heart, was justified by his own merits, moral and intellectual. Hitherto he had regarded his brother as amiable in truth, but thoughtless, wild, and shallow. Edward had from boyhood been prone to make escapades and involve himself in various scrapes, which had cost his father both anxiety and money, and though these errors were powerless to weaken his parent's partiality—for unreasonable partiality is proof against everything—still William had the satisfaction in the midst of his mortifications of cultivating a proud feeling that he deserved a different lot—that man to man he was the superior, and that weighed in an impartial balance he would not have been found wanting; but that had arisen within him, as he stood watching those two ascending the stairs—as he entered the Marchioness of Hurstmonceaux's drawing-room—which startled him and made him recoil at his own heart.

The serpent was suddenly revealed there. A power of evil, an intense capacity of hatred—a resolute and blasphemous determination to rebel against fate, destiny, providence, God—whatever name he might choose to give to that external force, which we all feel surrounding us, and to which we must sooner or later submit, appalled him—and whilst all within him was in this raging tumult of unhallowed thought—there stood his brother, with his honest, ingenuous face, beaming, as it seemed to him, like that of an angel—all happiness and goodness.

The irritation he felt, when Edward, in so affectionate and confiding a manner, laid hold of his arm, was insupportable.—There are humours—of the demon—of man's worst adversary, they must be—when the very merit of those we envy is only an additional cause of aversion and hate—when we have not even the excuse—the only palliation possible for the base passion—namely, a sense of injustice—and our evil feelings are but the more intensely bitter because we cannot disguise from ourselves that the happy one deserves his good fortune, and that the converse is justly ours.

Every blessing that could fall upon Edward he *did* at this moment deserve; and that William knew and felt with intensity. Whilst *he!*

“I’m not ill,” he said, shaking off Edward’s arm somewhat roughly, “Why will you bother me with supposing I am ill?—I hate to be thought ill—let me alone—I am only out of humour.”

“Out of humour, true enough!” said Edward, letting go his hold. And I confess if it were any one but yourself, who are not given to be pettish, I should not be surprised. Colder thanks for a great service I think few men ever received—but I imagined that you would have disregarded it. You are a philosopher you know—philosophers should despise such things. The marchioness is a mere heartless woman of the world—*that* one may see with half an eye. Pooh! pooh, man! How can you let such nonsense vex you?”

“I wish *you* would not talk nonsense—magnifying the ‘service’ as you call it, till it becomes ridiculous. . . . Really, Edward, you have lived so long out of the world, that you make yourself absurd by these romantic

exaggerations—and what is not quite fair, make others appear absurd also."

"I said nothing particularly absurd or exaggerated that I am aware of—but true enough you *are* out of humour, as you say—and so, I will, for the present, wish you a good morning."

And this saying he turned away chilled, vexed, and disappointed. He had loved and honoured his brother from a child, the proof he had just given of spirit and presence of mind had filled him with admiration, and with almost ^{most} enthusiastic gratitude—and to have his demonstrations repelled in this rude manner, not only wounded him as a brother, but offended him as a man.

He felt hurt and irritated and by that one whom, alone of all in this great metropolis he looked upon as a friend,—and this sudden repulse, and the consequent reaction of his feelings made him wretchedly uncomfortable. What could it be that had thus suddenly started up as it were between them? Whence this coldness and irritation? He could not understand it. Was it in truth mere temper and caprice? Was the man so esteemed from earliest childhood, for the

equality and firmness of his temper, subject like more imperfect beings, to the influences of mere humour; and was he beloved so little that they were to be visited upon him !

Edward was high spirited, and possessed abundance of common sense, but his feelings were warm. He could not easily be provoked, and he tried hard to bear the thing patiently; but he determined not to meet William again till the irritation upon his own side, at least, had in some degree subsided, so he resolved to spend the remainder of the day from home. And this he did in spite of the conversation in the morning; and though he knew that his father had a dinner party that day, at which it would be a considerable disappointment if he were not present.

But his was still a character of impulse—and the more he thought of his brother's words and manner, the less he found it possible to meet him with cordiality. Go home just at present, therefore, he could not, and he would not. He was sorry to disappoint his father, but the thing could not be helped.

What to do with himself? Why, go and

dine at the club, and make the best excuses he could for himself in the morning. And so to the Junior United Service Club he went, and sat down feeling uncomfortable enough, and ordered his chop, and took up the newspaper—trying to read, but comprehending not one word.

Sometimes the sweet smiles of Lady Emma were before him, and then it was as when the sun breaks out over the clouded landscape of an April day; but most often his thoughts took another turn.

He ran over in recollection the events of his, as yet, short life. Home and its history. His father, and his mother, and the loved companion of his childhood—his brother William.

And then his heart swelled as it had often done before, with a generous pity, as he contrasted the fond partiality of which from infancy he had been the object, with the checks and coldness which too often had been his brother's portion. Things which the warm heart of Edward had felt sensibly for him, and had endeavoured to repair by the strength of his own affection; and he had

believed, because it seemed so natural, that his feelings met from William with an equal return.

But he was not aware how far more hard was William's task. Pity is a sweet sentiment; easily excited and pleasant to experience—to weep with those that weep, interferes with no self-love—but to rejoice with those that rejoice;—to look without envy upon the advantages possessed by another—whilst the bosom is perhaps rankling with the sense of injustice to ourselves, this demands the true heroism of the spirit—that diviner form of noble, universal charity, of which the word “love” is but a narrow and feeble expression.

Had Edward guessed the real cause of his brother's altered manner, he would have been greatly relieved, and could at once have pardoned it; but an idea of the truth never entered his head; in its place strange suspicions began to arise, too painful to be endured, too base to be indulged—they should not be indulged. He would not do his brother the injustice to believe him to be jealous of his position and advantages; he who had, till now, shown himself so nobly exempt from the unworthy senti-

ment, even when there had been far greater occasion to excite it. No, no,—a little temper, a little ill humour—all men were subject to such things—that was it. Perhaps he *had* said something *inconvenant* in Regent's Park—he could not remember—but he dared to say something had passed which had offended his brother's nice sense of propriety—best think no more about it—all would be forgotten upon both sides, after a night's sleep.

So he applied himself to the study of his newspaper again, and was getting a little more interested, and beginning to feel more easy and as usual; when a hand was laid upon his shoulder, he turned round, it was Lord Algernon.

“Right glad to have found you! I thought you were gone home, pious young man! to dine, like a good boy, with your governor.—I despaired of catching you to-night; and yet I wanted to speak to you abominably and this it is,” sitting down and lowering his tone: “you must know, Edward, that I have very unguardedly and foolishly got myself engaged to play a match at whist, at our Club, there. Now, I am afraid that the fellows are rather

more than a match for me, so I am looking hard for my partner. Now, you are a clever hand at this, as at every other thing you set about: and so I want you to accept the honoured office."

"I dislike playing matches," answered Edward; "you know I always get off such things if I can. Excuse me this time—besides, to tell truth, I am very particularly ill-adapted for the sort of thing to-night—my head aches; and I am so confoundedly stupid and out of humour, that I should revoke or something of that sort before three deals were over. . . . Let me off to-night, Mordaunt"

"Nonsense! you are only hipped, only wool-gathering, and in—in Nonsense! man—you are the best player I know; and I counted upon you, or I never would have plunged in, neck and heels, as I have. Come, be good natured, Aubrey—don't disappoint me this once—and I'll tell you what I have got for you—an invitation from the Marchioness to dine with us to-morrow! You'll come—won't you?"

"Come!—thank you—Certainly I will come—but what of this match, Algernon: I

wish I could persuade you to give up playing matches — at least, betting upon your own side, as in days of yore I have seen you do. I hope there are no heavy bets depending upon this affair."

"Oh! a mere trifle, as far as I am concerned. You know I have renounced high play long ago. A pitiful trifle, merely to pass the time away—one must kill time," stretching himself and yawning, "some way or other. One must kill time, or time will kill us—that I know. What *can* one find to do? So come along—let us have a dinner and a bottle of claret at *the* club. Come along—there's a good fellow;" and putting his arm under Edward's, he rather dragged than led him away.

Edward yielded. Alas! he was too ready to yield to his own easy obliging temper; besides, was not Lord Algernon Lady Emma's brother?

And now they have dined, and each having taken a few glasses of wine, they are gone up stairs, and Edward has been

introduced to the scene within the embroidered curtains of the *portière*, and he has also been introduced to two somewhat sinister-looking men, who are presented under the names of Captain Locke and Mr Hargreves. These gentlemen are strangers to Edward, who, thinking of other things, and almost mechanically, has suffered himself to be set down at the whist table, and is now cutting for deal.

And so they begin to play.

Edward, once fairly in for it, endeavoured to collect his thoughts, and give his entire attention to what he was about. He loved this particular game, as he loved everything which taxed his powers of calculation, judgment, and memory. Alas ! that his habits of life and education had not furnished him, when his professional exertions were at a stand, with higher objects upon which to exercise these good gifts possessed by him in no ordinary degree. But alas ! alas ! what numbers around us are, every day that passes over our heads, betrayed into evil courses, merely by the same miserable want of something to do.

Edward observed with pleasure that Lord Algernon kept his word as to betting, and was very moderate in this respect, at which proceeding the two stranger gentlemen, as he thought, looked a good deal surprised and disappointed. And they now and then cast side glances at the other tables, where, to judge by appearances, very high play was going on, as if they felt that they themselves were wasting time.

They played, nevertheless, with a skill and attention which seemed to be habitual to them, whilst Lord Algernon, to the astonishment of Edward, never played worse in his life. Not that he made any very obvious blunders, but the whole style of his play that evening was greatly below his average force, and this, of course, put Edward out; he could not understand his partner's game. The luck, too, seemed to go against them; in short, the match was lost, at which Lord Algernon rose from the table, with an air of great vexation. He paid the stakes and bets by a cheque upon his father's banker, instead of upon his own agent; assuring the gentlemen, with a haughty laugh—

as they hesitated a little as to receiving it—that he had credit at that house to cover a much larger sum than the one in question—adding that, if they did not like to take his paper, he could give them his note of hand, which he would cash if they would take the trouble to call at his father's house any time that evening, or the following day.

The cheque was received without further demur; and then Lord Algernon put his arm under Edward's.

“I never saw you play worse,” he said, speaking loud enough to be heard by every one present.

“Nay—I did my best—but I told you I was not in the right humour. And give me leave to say, if I was not in force, I know another who was a good deal further below his usual mark.”

“Pooh! I played very well—I never recollect playing better,” and involuntarily he squeezed Edward's arm.

Edward suddenly looked up into his companion's face—interrogatively—as much as to say—‘what do you mean by that?’

But the face was turned away, and the arm

instantaneously relaxed, and Lord Algernon drew Edward, without further parley, out of the room, and into the street, and when there, after a little pause he said :

“I never was more vexed in my life than to lose this match, and to those two fellows—and lucky I did not get heated, and bet in the mad way I sometimes do. It provokes one to lose his money to a couple of snobs.”

“I wonder you choose to play with snobs. I think I never saw a more complete couple of such in my life.—Who are they ?”

“Oh ! they are not nobodies, as you may think—they are admitted into society—you see them everywhere. One is the man who has made untold sums in India ; the other is heir to the great contractor—he who realized his million, they say, by victualling his Majesty’s navy. I don’t suppose his beef was exactly Scotch ox—rather hard of digestion, some say—but what of that ? Seamen must not be dainty—and a millionaire has no sins. But if he don’t take care, they say, his son will get through the million in no time—not if he plays with the luck he did to-night, though.”

“Misery makes a man acquainted with

strange company, and so does the whist table," said Edward, "I wish one had anything better to do."

"What can a man do better whilst he is ashore?—What can poor devils of seamen find to do better?—At least, I for one cannot—I can't be dangling all day in ladies' drawing-rooms, or be disgracing myself in Rotten Row by sitting my horse like a tailor. What on earth is there for men like you or me to do but amuse ourselves?"

"What indeed!"

William Aubrey went home in no better humour than his brother.

Nay, worse, for he was angry with himself, as well as with all the world—out of sorts as regarded all around and within him.

Those two figures ascending the stairs together haunted him: and he read in that little group, as in some hieroglyphical scroll, that which made his heart die within him.

Besides, he knew the world well enough to understand all that was implied in the Mar-

chioness's manner; and never had he so bitterly felt the immensity of the distance which custom and prejudice had placed between himself and his brother. And, I think it is not till love mingles its interests with those of money, that an earnest mind like the one before us cares about it. Most young people are disinterested enough as regards mere wealth, till the possession of it or the want of it affects their prospects as regards the heart.

True enough William had long been alive to the position in which he was placed by general opinion, and by his father's decided views as regarded the rights of primogeniture, views which Mr Aubrey carried to the utmost extent to which a proud and ambitious temper can lead.—From a mere child he had been made to feel this, and in a manner few children are capable of feeling such things; but now those sensations began to assume a bitterness, and to excite an exasperation hitherto unknown, and which frightened even himself.

He looked upon himself as an outcast—excluded—shut out from the dearest objects of the heart by his inflexible destiny.

What was he?—what could he ever be? Should he toil in an ungrateful profession—pass all the best years of life in arduous exertions and the lonely solitude of heart—looked down upon with civil contempt—as a thing most carefully to be watched and avoided by those he alone cared to interest or please? Forbidden even the endeavour to make himself acceptable to her, whom he had thought—whom he still thought—he might have had the power to win.

But what—granted that she might have been won to love him—what as things stood had he to offer?—The miserable pittance of a few hundreds a year, and—love!—Love in a cottage!—a lot such as love in a cottage appears to the children of this world—of this our century. And this, whilst his brother—his rival brother—the brother sent into the world just half an hour before himself—possessed enormous expectations to lay at her feet—all that pride, pomp, wealth, and luxury—which offering it was evident the mother would be too happy to accept.

What had he to offer to this lovely girl as the recompense for her heart?—if that heart

on him were generously bestowed—how could he—and how could his brother—reward her?

Oh! true love is prodigal—is grasping. All the gems of the Indies seem too poor to lavish upon its idol: and the man who can despise wealth as regards himself, feels as a very beggar, when he wants the oblation to offer to the bright particular star he worships.

William Aubrey's feelings were partly noble, generous, and good; partly envious, jealous, and bad—but good or bad they were alike painful.

All was but pain—pain—pain.

Again he went into the Park, for he hated the idea of returning to his father's house: but here, as elsewhere, the crowds oppressed, and seemed almost to suffocate him. So he turned to Kensington Gardens, and plunged among the thickest and most unfrequented solitudes, there to indulge his misery.

The misery of a most lonely and despairing heart.

He looked round. He wanted some one to whom he might open his heart; some tender female breast upon which he might repose!

Hitherto he had in every trouble sufficed

to himself, but now he yearned for tenderness and sympathy. He was so utterly disheartened that he felt, what we have all more or less at times experienced, the necessity for seeking some arbiter of conscience—some other one to decide how far our feelings are justifiable or wrong—to draw the moral line which we are too much agitated by passion to trace for ourselves.

Unhappy man. He had no mother,—he never had known what it was to have a mother. She who when living had claimed the name was now dead, but living or dead it was the same thing, she had been no mother to him. She had always professed—she seemed to take an unnatural pride in professing—how little she cared for him. As if she magnified her idol and justified her partiality, by undervaluing the unfortunate other child. People blamed her much, some even remonstrated, but the thoughtless and heartless woman seemed to imagine it quite excuse enough to reply with an unfeeling laugh, that for her part she wondered what any one could see in William to put him in comparison with Edward, whom she thought the most charming

child she ever had seen. She could not help it, but there was something about the other which made him quite her pet aversion.

“ I can’t conceive what you all see in him,” she would say.

Sister there was none, to make up in some degree for this cruel alienation; kind maidenly aunt, there was none to act the part of more than mother to the rejected child. Not one female relation had the boy sufficiently near to atone in some degree for the unnatural mother’s injustice—yet was there one woman, obscure of station indeed, but strong and fervent in heart, who he felt had loved him from his cradle, with that love which passeth show—which finds little vent in words or caresses, but is deep, strong, and partial, and always there.

This woman, in short, was no other than his wet-nurse—Alice Craven.

“ Nay, take him away, I cannot abide the sight of him. I never saw such an ugly little wretch of a thing in my life.”

“ He appears to be a very delicate child, madam,” said the doctor, looking with a benevolent interest at the wretched half-starved infant—“ and I repeat what I before said—that the only chance of rearing him lies in sending him out of town immediately. The young woman I have brought with me is a highly respectable person—whom I have known all my life. She is married to Mr Clarkson’s gamekeeper, and lives down in Sussex; and the fine air of those hills will give the child a better chance for life than anything else we can do—I am no advocate, in general, for wet-nursing, far less for sending infants out of their own nursery—out to nurse—as was the fashion some years ago—but this is an exceptional case.

“ Oh, dear! do just what you like—only leave me my own sweet, darling baby”—looking down with pride at the beautiful infant sleeping by her side—“ and do what you will with the other—for I never shall abide him.”

“ Madam,” said the Doctor gravely—“ these are strange words.”

Upon which she opened wide her large,

proud, amazed eyes, which said as plainly as eyes could speak,—“What! Do you presume to lecture me!”

He saw it would not do, but the look only confirmed him in his opinion. The infant could be no loser, as he thought, in any way, by being removed from such a mother, and his best chance for life lay in the fresh air of the country. This heartless young lady, when she saw him return a fine blooming boy, might learn better than to indulge this unnatural aversion.

I doubt whether he judged rightly in thus separating the parties, but it was done for the best.

“Would you like to see the wet nurse, madam?”

“Well—yes—just as you please—Yes—I think I may as well see her—but I really am horribly exhausted—quite feverish, doctor, with all this fuss—Nurse, for goodness sake, give me something.”

“Had not you better, my lady, dispense with seeing the young woman,” begins the nurse in her most blanditious tone. “Really, madam, you seem quite overdone—Let me

take away the sweet angel baby.—What, my prince!—are you opening your beautiful eyes—Look! and if they arn't just for all the wide world like his own dear mama's. Oh! but ain't he a precious jewel?"

Hugging him to her old deceitful bosom, whilst the doctor turned away thoroughly disgusted, and opened the door himself to introduce the young woman, whom he proposed to engage as wet nurse.

She was a handsome, intelligent, clever-looking young person, with every appearance of health,—though of dark, rather than florid complexion.

The lady cast her eyes carelessly upon her.

"Well, I should not think *you* would make such a capital wet nurse," she said.

"Pardon me, madam," put in the doctor, "I will engage for that. This lady and I, Mrs Craven," he said, "think that if it would be agreeable to you—you had better take the child altogether under your care—I mean carry him home with you—for he is a very delicate baby—and I doubt whether there is any chance of rearing him if we keep him in town. I have known you for some time—I

think I may trust you—I rely upon your care,” he said emphatically, almost severely, —“children in these cases have often not justice done to them—I shall expect, and I shall take care to know that you do justice to this child.—Recollect, that you will be answerable not only to his parents, but to *me*.”

He looked at her with meaning.

She coloured a little—then she fixed a pair of fine intelligent eyes upon the doctor’s face, and said with some spirit—“I understand you, sir,—God do so to me, and more also if I do not my best by this baby.”

“Madam, you may trust her implicitly,” said the doctor, turning to the lady.

“La ! what a solemn fuss you make about the commonest thing in the world—why everybody used to be brought up in this way—but I think the world is children mad at present.” And she prepared to turn round and compose herself to sleep.

The doctor put the baby into the young woman’s arms.—“You may take him now,” he said,—“my carriage shall carry you down

to Mitcham Park—it is about twenty miles off, I think."

"Will you not please to kiss the child, ma'am, before he goes?" asked the wet nurse.

"La!—yes—oh you horrid fright"—as the mantle was opened—"No, I positively can't kiss it—but, au revoir, my young man," stroking his little, thin, red hand, in a playful, careless sort of manner—"And if you can, good woman, bring me back something a little less horrid looking—Do you hear, young woman?"

She turned on her pillow,—the wet nurse pressed the poor unconscious baby to her heart.—The good doctor saw the action and was satisfied.

CHAPTER VI.

Under the greenwood tree,
Oh! who will live with me
And hear the sweet birds' note.—SHAKSPEARE.

THE rejected child was taken to the solitary hills of Sussex; the heart of the foster-mother swelling high with all a woman's generous tenderness to the oppressed and unfortunate.

Closely nestling to her bosom she carried him, whilst her own boy, a little infant about the same age, was consigned to the arm of a female friend.

Right glad was Alice Craven to be allowed to carry the child home with her, for it had been a sore thing to leave her husband and have to seek a place of wet nurse in the great metropolis. But misfortune upon misfortune had visited the hapless gamekeeper. He had

begun by losing, for him, a large sum of money—nearly the whole amount of his savings—through the failure of a bank in which they had been deposited. His master had been head partner in that bank; and in its shipwreck he himself was totally ruined. All his servants were discharged as a matter of course, and poor Craven found himself not only out of place, but suffering under rheumatic fever; the result of his exertions during the nights of a most inclement and tempestuous winter.

He had to enter the hospital.—His wife to live as she could. He had recovered at last, and they had just lately obtained the place at Mr Clarkson's, but the furnishing of their cottage and various expenses, incident to a long illness, had put them sadly behind in the world;—so that when their little one was born, it was resolved upon between them that, as the only chance of redeeming their circumstances, Alice should engage herself as wet nurse.

Dr F., the great lying-in physician, was very well known to Alice; who had indeed been brought up from infancy in his house—serving there in various capacities until she

left it, with the doctor's approbation, to be married to Craven,—a very respectable man, though nearly twenty years older than herself.

She loved him, nevertheless, with all the honest warmth of a true woman's heart, and as the doctor's carriage rolled pleasantly along, her joy at being restored to her husband so soon thus expanded itself to her friend and companion Hester Baker, who had accompanied her from Sussex:—

“I am so glad, Hetty, to be back with Craven again, for he is mighty weakly still—and wants his wife very badly at times to look after him,—for he's one that never thinks of himself.—It was very, very good, and kind of Dr F. to plan for me to bring the babe down here.”

“So I think—and it will make Master Craven glad at his heart to have you back again—But, Alice, excuse an old friend for speaking her mind—I doubt whether having these *two* children to take care of, and no one to look after you or them—and one your own child, and the other an alien and a stranger—I doubt but it may be a snare to you, Alice.—

Blood is thicker than water.—It will be hard to do justice between them.”

“Do you think so?” pressing the little stranger, who now hung upon her breast.—“Do you think so? Well, I should have thought so an hour ago—thought so, if this child had been a fine, strong, happy, prosperous baby. But I’ll tell you what, Hetty, with such a mother as that one—I think the very beggar born on a dunghill is better off than he, in spite of his fine clothes—and even his very clothes look to me less handsome than his brother’s, and I feel the greatest pity for the poor weeny thing—and I can love it—aye just as I should, and would, have done if he and that little dark-eyed rascal there had been twins.—Yes, I can, and shall—you dear monkey—and you must remember, sir, that if you are turned off to the cow, it’s all for your sake—and his, that’s better than ever you will be—that it’s done.”

“Well, I hope and I trust you’ll keep to it—and recollect what the doctor said as he put the babe into your arms in the carriage.—He’s a good, but he’s a dour man is Dr F., if as how he thought any child of *his* was

wronged by any nurse of his'n—it would be hard if he ever forgave it."

"I would'n't offend him for all the whole world," said Alice, with a look of dismay,— "and I'm half afraid to think, after what you say, that I have undertaken the charge of one of *his*. If any harm came to it, he'd never, never, forgive me—and who knows? It's such a delicate-looking little darling.—Oh Hetty, Hetty, I begin to wish I never had art or part in this business—and you, my little own one, what right had I to sell your flesh and blood?"

"Don't fret—don't fret, Alice—I'm sorry I said what I did—but one's so afraid for those who enter into temptation—and it *is* a temptation—but you were right to do as you have done—a God above will keep you if you bravely try to do your duty.—Twins, aye twins!—That is the way to look upon it—you must try to think you had twins—Only one is the weakest and the most to be pitied, and you must be just the opposite of that grand, bad lady—and just take the most care of it upon that account,—and do *more* for it, for fear you should do less by it."

“ And so I will—and so I shall—and you shall see, Hetty—you and the doctor and all the world,—whether I don’t turn him out when the year is over as fine a baby as the best.”

The gamekeeper’s cottage stood in a wood, which spread over a vast extent of hill and dale country, in the most secluded part of the centre of Sussex.

It was, indeed, a lonely spot, and rarely visited, for neighbours there were none within a couple of miles, and Alice and her husband passed weeks and even months without seeing human face, except of the underkeepers, with whom the young woman had little or nothing to do.

She found it all the more easy upon that account to perform her duty by these two children. Her husband excepted, they occupied all her time, and were quite sufficient to fill her life with interests. Alice was one of those who live in their heart and affections—a woman of strong passions, and high imagination unusual in those of her position. In these she seemed to live, and what is rarely found with those in her rank of life, who seem to find it impossible to

exist without society, and to consider dullness as the greatest affliction that can befall them,—she was quite content to dwell in the almost absolute solitude of the woodland wilderness around her.

She was, as I have said, a woman of intense feeling and great imagination—a poet unknown to herself.—The beauty of the woods—the sweet sounds and varied notes that are heard in the branches—the music of the wind—nature's great organ pipe—whether breathing softly among the branches, or in a roar of full diapason sweeping along the tops of the oaks—the primrose and wood anemones of spring—wild briars and brown nuts of summer and autumn—and all the varied tints and changes of the fleeting, ever beautiful, year were to her sources of intense delight.

And pretty it was to see her, when the labour of the day was over, sitting by the side of a clear bubbling brook, that wandered through the moss and wild flowers, and lost itself in the thickets hard by the cottage. She, busy at her needle-work,—the picture of neatness and rural beauty, humming a low song, and rocking the cradle with her foot in

which the two infants lay. Whilst the cuckoo was calling, the throstles and black-birds filling the bushes and tree-tops with melody—and the nightingale, at a little distance singing his fill.

So the gamekeeper found her. One sweet afternoon it was. The setting sun gleaming through the trees, throwing his slant beams upon her golden hair, and shedding a yellow beauty upon the thickets and bushes around her.

He paused, and looked upon her with his grave, serious eye, as he leaned upon his gun,—and watched her as she lifted her head from her work—and stooped over, and looked into the cradle as a little whine was heard to proceed from it. Then she kneeled down by the side and soothed the little complainer to sleep again, and then bending down kissed first one and then the other, and so, serene and peaceful, took up her sewing once more.

The serenity and peace that were upon that face at this period of her life it was, in itself, a delight to behold.

“ That’s right,” said the honest gamekeeper to himself,—“ that’s just as I would have it.

And yet, it's a marvel to me how she can do it. Come when I may, look after matters as jealously as I will—it's all the same—I never catch her tripping—It's all as if they were twins—as she promised me. No one could guess which was her own child, only, if there *is* a preference, it's always for the t'other one."

"Thou *art* a good lass, Alice," he went on, coming up to her, and laying his hand upon her shoulder.

She started up and turned round, and the sudden glow of joy came into her face—as it always did when he returned home safe.

It was a perennial feeling—every day the same—the same gush of joy when he came home.

He who was indeed her best friend—loved, honoured, and obeyed, as the superior, the protector, the firm and wise adviser—the all on earth to her, and he *deserved it*.

A woman's love is an inexhaustible spring, gushing forth in the desert of life, and making the wilderness to flourish like a rose.

"Thou art a good lass," he had said, and his manly features and dark eye were beaming with satisfaction and approbation.

“I hardly thought,” he went on, still keeping his large arm, covered with the rough shooter’s jacket, over her slender and delicate shoulders. “I hardly thought, my good girl—though I knew all along thou wert no common one—that thou couldst stand by thy good intentions so bravely and truthfully as thou hast done.”

They sat down upon the mossy bank together, he still fondly keeping his arm around her.

“Dost thou know, Alice, when thou brought’st that babe home, my heart misgave me fearfully?”

“I don’t know why it should,” she said, looking up into his eyes. “Could you not trust me with it?”

“If I could have trusted any woman, I could trust thee; but mother’s love is so strong. The God above sent it for the best of purposes,—he made the mother’s heart bolder than the brave man’s—softer than the brooding dove’s—more terrible than the lion in its fury. It was a good and wise purpose, for all his gifts are good; but man—man—he misdirects and mars the good gifts

of the Almighty, and the stream which in its native bed brings refreshment and blessing to all—driven from its course, only mischiefs and harms. I am no scholar, Alice, and I can't put into words all I feel; but I was afraid—and that's the long and short of it—that *because* thou hast such a true mother's feeling in thy breast, *therefore* it would be the more impossible for thee to do thy duty."

"But it has been made quite easy to me, you see, Godfrey; for I love this child as my own. I feel as if it had no mother of its own, and I am *so* sorry for it."

"That is well, for do you know, Alice, if I thought you unmindful of your duty, or if any hurt were to come to this child entrusted to our good faith, I think I should go wild—I think—I think—I could never forgive—not even thee, Alice."

"Don't talk so, pray don't talk so—you frighten me. I do my best; you know I do; but God only knows—suppose the child should fall sick and die."

A cloud passed over the strong face of the man of the woodlands—that brave, daring, high-spirited man.

“Sick! and die!—Don’t let it—that’s all—Babies never die but through want of care—what art thou talking of, Alice—As if thou wer’t preparing me—it bodes no good to talk in that way—Don’t *let* it die—Do you hear me”—and he withdrew his arm on her shoulder—“for mark my words—I never would and I never could forgive thee, if that child were to die.”

Alice turned pale—she dreaded her husband’s displeasure above all things—he was as the mighty thunderer to the fair and frail one—strong in his love—but annihilating in his anger.

She had seen him angry once or twice—not with herself, and not without cause—for his anger had been excited by deeds of cruelty on the part of those under his orders—but it had been terrible—she shuddered whenever she thought of it.

The babes began to move and to cry.

She took them up—one in each arm—and brought them to her husband—“And which looks the best?” asked she, and smiled.

“Why that little urchin—I declare I hardly know one from the other—but this

one seems to me the bonniest—and that's not our's, Alice—”

“ No,” said Alice, and she turned a little pale, and her eye saddened; “ I have done my duty—but that's not our's—poor baby, he was born the strongest of the two—but he's not the strongest now.”

“ Never mind, lass—never vex thyself—get him along some how or other till he's eighteen months old, and then we'll see if we don't make a man of him.”

“ Ah ! ” sighed Alice, and a dark presentiment of evil, which had haunted her ever since she had undertaken her task, came over her—“ Ah ! eighteen months ! —That's a long time, to.”

And too true—when at the end of two years—for so long was the little William Aubrey allowed to remain with his foster mother—when at the end of two years Alice brought the boy to his parents, she returned to a desolate home—she had sometime been a childless mother.

She never had any other children—and she lived on in the secluded forest a desolate woman.

She never altogether recovered the loss of her child. The event had happened when her husband was far away in Scotland, where he had been detained nearly six months.

It had been impossible for Godfrey to rejoin his wife in this time of heavy trial. People in his condition are still more the slaves of circumstances than those above them —it is unnecessary to enter into the details of these.—Suffice it to say, that Alice was constrained to meet this great sorrow alone—and such was its effect upon her that from that time forth she became an altered woman.

She said little—but at times expressions of remorse would mingle with her grief.—It seemed as if she could not be comforted—In vain her friend Hester endeavoured to console her for having given the little one a rival—

She was, however, better after Godfrey returned—

And her face lightened up with a strange troubled joy, when laying his hand upon her head he said solemnly—

“We ought to thank God that it pleased him to take *that* one.”

“ It is a hard saying, dear Alice,” he added kindly, bending towards her and striving to comfort her—“ a hard saying for thee, poor, childless mother—but let us thank God nevertheless—thou did’st thy duty—He will remember thee in the day when he maketh up his jewels, and thou shalt have thy child again—doubt it not.”

But at that she cried bitterly. It was as if she could not be comforted.

“ Mrs Craven is here,” said the footman, as William at last returning home was wearily re-entering the house.

His first feeling was vexation.

He was not in a humour to see even her.—He was fond of his nurse.—Still she could not compensate for the immensity of the want which pressed upon him.

He felt ashamed of this unamiable feeling, and recovering himself, “ Where is she?” asked he.

“ Up in your study, sir.”

“ Has she had anything to eat and drink?”

“A cup of tea in the housekeeper’s room, sir—Mrs Anderson has taken good care of her.”

“That is right.”

“Mammy!—” as he opened the door—“I am glad to see you.”

“Child!—Mr William”—rising up, taking his hand, and looking upon him with *such* a look!

. . . “Such, as the mother ostrich fixes on her young,

When that intense affection wakens the breath of life.”

“It’s a long, long time, since I have been to see you, Mr William.”

“You don’t come often, good Mammy—Sit down, my dear woman—why don’t you come oftener?”

“I don’t like to be troublesome,” she said, “Your father’s fine servants don’t fancy me too much, as it is—and, perhaps, you would be tired of seeing your poor nurse’s face if she came too often—eh?—Mr William.”

“Pooh!—Don’t talk nonsense—You know I’m always glad to see you—and how’s Godfrey Craven?”

“ Why, he’s ailing.”

“ Ailing! What’s the matter with him?”

“ The old matter and worse—he’s fast losing the use of his limbs.”

“ You don’t say so—and what are you both to do?”

“ Nay—”

She said no more, she looked wistfully at him.

“ Nay! That’s no answer—what do you purpose to do?”

The woman seemed hurt at the way in which he spoke, as if she expected something more than this.

At last she articulated, but as with some difficulty :

“ You robbed him of his son.”

“ I!—Now mammy—or Alice Craven.”

“ Don’t call me Alice Craven,” she said angrily—“ Call me mammy.”

“ Well, mammy—you are always casting that up to me,—as if” he added with bitterness,—“ it was my fault, that a helpless infant I was driven from the bosom of an unnatural mother, and cast upon the tender mercies of a stranger—You proved yourself

a mother and more I am sure, than *a* mother or at least than *my* mother to me—And you know—or ought to know, I feel deeply grateful for your care—and all that I can do; all that it is reasonable for me to do—”

“ Reasonable ! ” she muttered to herself.

“ Yes, reasonable—you know I am always ready to do—but, Alice, you sometimes vex me—you seem to assert a claim over me that is more than I can exactly acknowledge—you know I am a man of a peculiar nature—not a particularly amiable one, I am afraid—and the more things of this kind are pressed upon me, the more inclined I feel to resist them. Tell me what you want—ask what you wish, but do not remind me of the wrong done to your poor little child, when I was a baby—in which others, not I—were art and part.”

“ Yes, yes, it was all my own fault—blame *me* for it—Say what you will.”

“ I blame nobody. We were all in the common case—the case of most human beings—of all but the *very* strong willed—we are the mere sport of circumstances, over which we have no control, and which we are too blind to bend to our good, even if we could control them.

But let us have done with retrospect. Tell me what you want me to do for Godfrey Craven."

"What his son would have done for him—if he had had that son whom you—I mustn't say that again, it seems—whom I—and other things robbed him of."

"Well, what would that son, do you suppose, have done?"

"He would have maintained him."

"But I have not money to maintain him—not as he ought to be maintained—not as I wish. You know the allowance my father gives me is not a large one."

"Shame!" she said bitterly.

"He has his own notions upon the subject—and probably just ones. As I am to have only a younger son's portion, he thinks I ought to be accustomed to do without money—so he gives me an allowance proportioned to my expectations."

"Whilst the Captain"

"Has one in proportion to *his* expectations."

"Shame!—shame!"

"Nay, mammy, don't look so black—it's the way of the world."

"It's a very vile, bad, and unjust one—and so I will ever say."

“And so you ever have said—over and over again—and so let it now be said for the last time—for there is no remedy.”

“And you!—so handsome, so good, and so clever!”

“And so is the Captain, as you call him, much handsomer, quite as clever, and a thousand times more good.”

“I don’t believe it—I don’t believe it—everybody says how clever you are—but only to think of your being poor—I can hardly credit that.”

“Yes, good mam—I really am poor—poor for my wants and position. These things are relative—I declare I do not believe there is an honest labourer’s son in the kingdom who is so often pressed for money as I am.”

Alice seemed actually to writhe with pain. Her eyes were fixed upon the ground. At last, composing herself with considerable difficulty, she said :

“And you look ill, Mr William—but I don’t wonder you look ill—bad treatment makes us all look ill.”

“I am not badly treated, my good nurse, don’t talk in that way.”

“But I say you *are*—To set one brother so above another!”

“It’s the way of the world, dear mammy—If you love me, say no more about it.”

“But why do you look so ill?”

“Do I look ill?—I was not aware that I was looking ill.”

“Ah! Mr William, Mr William!—something is amiss at your heart—I can see it—I can see it.”

“To be sure,” she went on, “it is not for such as I to be trusted with the secrets of such as you—but if I knew what ailed you, I could—I could find something, perhaps, to comfort you,” she added, rising and putting her hand fondly upon his shoulders, and looking up beseechingly in his face.

But recollecting herself—for there was an almost imperceptible motion of the shoulders, as if to shake off the hand—she shrank back and resumed her seat.

His heart smote him as she did this—for the hardness of his pride—so he went and sat down by her, and took her hand.

“Mammy,” he said, “if I were to tell you what ailed me, could you keep it to yourself?

You are not like other women—you *could* keep it sacredly to yourself.”

“Ah! child—ah! Mr William!—do you think that they could drag out of me, by wild horses, what concerns you!—or burn it out of me with red hot irons? Tell your poor mammy what’s the matter—for something is the matter—something *does* ail you.”

“Nurse,” he said, and his whole countenance flushed up into a crimson glow—“What if William Aubrey was in love?”

“Dear, dear child! is that all?” she said, much relieved, and her face becoming serene at once.

“Is that all?—Surely there can be no great harm in that—Surely you’ll not love in vain, with your beautiful face—for beautiful it is, though, perhaps, not altogether so blooming and handsome as the Captain’s—and surely, with that sweet, thoughtful smile—and that thinking brow, as one may say, of your’s—you’re out and out more interesting than the Captain—and everybody agrees he’s a charming young man !”

First a pensive, melancholy smile of affection, and then a darkened, clouded brow

answered this effusion, but William spoke not.

“What’s the matter, my dearest boy?—what’s the matter, Mr William? Why should *you* be crossed in love—all true lovers as I’ve heard and partly know, are apt to be despairing. It’s a sure sign of the passion. Why, even Godfrey would be as downcast as a drooping bird, strong man as he is, when he was in love with me! So keep a good heart, dear Mr William, for faint heart never won fair lady. And she must be a strange woman to my mind,” looking fondly upon him, “who could prove cruel to such as you.”

“Dear nurse! your wisdom is of the woods. You speak as a child of nature such as you are.—You know not how these things are carried on in the great world—in London here. Life is not as it was in those old ballads of which you are so fond. Grant she would love me—what am I?—what have I to offer! Let her prefer me to him in her heart—what matter? But she does not love me—she does *not* prefer me.”

And he dropped his face between his hands.

“ Oh mother!—mother! ” he went on in a low murmuring tone, yielding himself up for once to the weakness of complaint, tempted to it by the loving and sympathising character of his companion—“ Oh mother, mother, it was little to me till now—that inequality of condition which you have so resented for me—but now it comes—hard—hard—I saw her first—I loved her before he had cast his eye upon her—I feel it is folly perhaps—but I feel that for me and not for him nature had bestowed that wonderful charm—that face and form—that spiritual beauty, far greater than all other beauty, yet enhanced by so much beauty—those eyes that smile—that voice!—We are different men—He and I—altogether different—not a thought, not a feeling in common. Twins I have heard, are either as one single point, so closely are they united—or as two opposite poles, exactly the reverse of each other—So it is with us.”

“ He called me mother,” said Alice to herself—and her heart fluttered and beat as it always did, when that fond name was bestowed upon her. The conventional circum-

stances which separated them were so painful to a heart glowing with the strongest and warmest affections, all concentrated upon two objects—her husband and this child!

This child who had hung from his callow infancy at her breast, and whom she longed to embrace and caress as a son.—But she dared not. He was a great man's child, and she a poor gamekeeper's wife. There was that deep, deep gulph between them—inferior and superior—and William was one accustomed to keep what he considered his proper position, in all circumstances. Now and then, however, upon occasions of sudden emotion he, who had never known what it was to experience the tenderness of his own high-bred mother—would bestow the name upon one who had proved herself even more than mother to him.

And then how her heart leapt at the sound. Mammy was but a pet name carelessly and commonly bestowed—*Mother* came with a certain solemnity, as if the heart in its severer moments acknowledged the claim—the claim of a love passing that of a mother which she felt for him.

“He called me mother,”—and her heart beat, and glowed, and yearned towards him at the word.

“Sir—Mr William—dear young master!” she faltered out, “I never saw you so unhappy before. You mustn’t be unhappy—it’s not for you to be unhappy. Something must be done. *You must not* be unhappy. I think I know—though you think I don’t—why that beautiful young lady and you can’t have one another. It’s the old thing—because of Mr Aubrey’s injustice and partiality—but, sir—if the young lady loves you, things might be made more even. Mr Aubrey’s a stern and a harsh, but he’s not a bad man—The heart that can love anything as he loves the Captain can’t be so shut up to others as it may seem—So hear reason—*If* the young lady loves you with a true and faithful heart, sure and certain but we’ll find a means to make you happy. It seems bold in me to say so much; but Mr Aubrey’s kind and condescending to me—for . . . too . . . and—and—well—he’d listen to me pleading for you. I know he would—He feels I’ve a right to speak for you. He likes me for

loving you. He's very rich, we all know . . . So if this young lady really loves you, as she must and ought—keep a good heart and trust to your poor mammy."

"Love me! Did I say she loved me? No, no, Alice—though I have that strange and passionate persuasion that we were made to be one, it is too late—He has already come between us—he, who has the right to put himself forward, which I, who had nothing to offer, could not do. She is a peer's daughter, Alice—Edward is an engaging fellow—he has already entered the lists in public. If I were to attempt it now, it would be I who should assume the odious character of my brother's supplanter and rival—and, besides, what could I offer to the woman I loved?—A younger son's portion instead of a vast estate—a pretty proof of disinterested affection that would be—The sacrifices to be all upon her side! and for one who—oh! if he had millions of worlds to offer, would have laid them all at her feet."

He rose from his seat in great agitation.

Alice looked after him with sad surprise as he paced up and down the room, striving to

recover his composure. She had never seen him so moved before. He was usually so calm—so completely the master of himself. So he had ever been, as the thoughtful boy—yet more as the well-collected man.

It was a strange passion this—something she had never seen before—so different from what she would have expected in him—from what she had observed in others.

He came and sat down by her again.

Having once opened his heart, it seemed as if he must go on. The flood-gates of feeling once unlocked, the stream of confidence flowed full and fast to this affectionate and humble friend.

“Strange, strange,” he said, sitting down by her. “I have a superstition about it—Such things cannot be sent—cannot come over us like a summer cloud, for nothing. Unprepared as I was—never dreaming of any such matter—that this one face among so many faces—fair, it is true—most fair . . . Yet there were others as fair—fairer, perhaps . . . That this one face—should have power to raise in me this unaccountable passion. Strange! strange!—What is the meaning of

it all?—For surely I cannot believe but that such things *have* a meaning—that these mighty, mysterious forces of passion have an errand! The very excess”—he went on—“ the very absurdity of my hopes and wishes seem to prove to me that in some way or other they shall be accomplished. Such things cannot be in vain—cannot—shall not!—I must—I will possess her! And yet, yet—fool—fool”—striking his forehead, and the bright flashing of his eye subsiding to the deepest melancholy—“ there is no way—not the slightest shadow of a way and yet. Yes, Alice,” turning to her, with a look so wild it almost approached to madness, “ I feel that I cannot live to see her another’s, and that other my brother!—I would rather she were dead! Ah, ah, there is the arrow’s barb—there the venom of the wound—my brother!—my own brother!—So near, and yet so far—The same blood, the same breath, the same home, the same hearth! Ah! ah!” and he gnashed his teeth in bitterest agony, “ ah! ah!—there it is!—there it is! and rather than *that*!—he must die, or I will die.”

She laid hold of his arm; she was pale as death—her teeth were chattering.

“No, no—don’t talk in that way.—Your brother! No brother of yours—always crossing your path. No, don’t look upon it so—If that it is hurts you so, look upon him as he is—as he has always been—your rival—your worst enemy—anything but your brother.”

The words produced a revulsion of feeling.

“Don’t talk in that way, woman”—he said, turning upon her—“Don’t talk so—you know or ought to know that he has been the kindest and most affectionate of brothers.—Would God I could love him as he has loved me !”

“Then why do you talk so wildly ?”

“Because you cannot conceive—no one who has not felt it *can* conceive, that horrid jealousy in love—doubly horrid when it lives among such near relations!—Any other rivalry—any other torture but *that*. It is horrid—it is dreadful!—it is insupportable! Yes,” and his pale countenance suddenly brightened—“it *is* insupportable, and I will not even try to bear it.”

And then, to compose his agitation, there

came over him—not the holy and manly determination to conquer and to subdue himself, to break by one great and painful effort those shackles of the soul which love without hope when not resisted and vanquished, casts over us. No strong sense of duty to himself—to his brother—to the Great Author of his being who sent him into the world to strive, and to battle, and to conquer evil and himself—none of these faithful and high thoughts calmed *him*.

No, he deadened himself by that opiate of the great enemy—when hope is not—and a noble resignation of the object desired is not—by the opiate of despair.

By yielding to the full force of his despair.

One outlet to this earth's woes—and that easy enough to the man who neither values life nor fears death—is ever open—He thought of a certain cool, deep, dark water, somewhere upon his father's land—hung over and shaded with oak, and alders, and willows,—where, as boys, they two had been forbidden ever to go, for the water was esteemed fathomless—There it lay sleeping, dark, silent, and cool.

Here, as a man, he had often been, and

startled the wild duck from her nest, in the reeds upon the side,—and there, under that huge oak tree, whose golden-leaved branches spread far over the stream, darkening that which was already dark, there he had once sat, his Shakespeare in his hand—half-opened, at the place where Ophelia sinks into the envious stream. There he had sat, looking into the still depths—musing upon that strange theme,—self-murder. In the calm philosophic balance of his own feelings, marvelling at the state of mind—speculating upon the passion of despair—which could so rupture all the instinctive laws of nature.

He recollected the day well—and smiled bitterly at his own vain philosophy.

Now that deep pool—it was to that he looked.

There was rest—There, that heart, now writhing under the scorpion lash of the furies, should find peace.

Sleep! peace!

Eternal sleep and peace!

Ah! fool, fool! who will assure thee of that? Vain and presumptuous intellect—false and mistaken courage—daring to die!—

not daring to suffer! Ignorant even of the mystery—the deep mystery of passion under which he is agonising—yet without fear or doubt rushing upon the altogether unknown.

“I will not even try to endure it!”

He had said it, and in that saying found comfort and calm.

And a certain dark composure was restored to the face, which had been working with an agony in him so unnatural.

But Alice gazed upon him with terror.

She was silent for some moments, sitting there, and looking at him with anxious affrighted eye.

“Will not try—will not try—what does that mean?—What does he mean by that?” she kept repeating to herself.

“I am but a poor humble woman, you know, Mr William,” at last she ventured to say; “but not altogether untaught.—Where I was brought up they taught me something—not enough—not enough,” she said, looking at him with much emotion.—“Ah, dear! not nearly enough. They never taught me either *how* to bear—but one thing the Doctor did

teach me—that we must all try to bear whatever comes—whatever comes . . . He was a firm strong man himself, not like you, Mr William . . . A strong built, firm, great, brave man, and nothing ever upset *him*. He expected all of us to be as he was—but he never taught us *how*—only that—But it was enough, because he was firm we dared not but be firm. And so—and so—it shocks me, and it grieves me, Mr William, sir, to hear you say, you will not try. What will you do if you won't try?—What *are* we to do if we won't try to bear?"

"Oh! oh! never mind—never mind—you are no casuist, Alice,—how should you be? Never mind me."

There was something in his look that she could not endure.

"But what do you mean?"

"Oh, pooh! nothing—and now, dear Alice, I have said enough, and a great deal too much; however, it has done me good, dear, kind woman. Nothing like you women for that," assuming a careless air, as he rose and went to open the door. "Good bye, dear mam," giving her a kiss, "and think no more

of what I have said—forget it as soon as you can, there's a dear woman.”—

And so he got her out of the room.

But as she went down stairs she kept saying to herself, “ If he had but said he would do it—he would never do it—so my husband always says—only get a man to talk about killing himself and he'll never kill himself—but if this young lady should marry his brother—he's one to do it—he put me off so—I know he *will* do it—I know him—I know every pulse that beats in his proud heart—This brother!—and what right has that man to come and take, one by one, every blessing of this one's life away—canker—canker—eating out his brother's heart—*his* brother!—very like him!

“ But he shan't have that young lady—He shan't have everything and leave my William nothing. No, he shan't. There is one here who loves him, if nobody else on earth does, and he shan't have his noble soul rived out of his body for any of them.”

Alice had not been reared in the family of the strong, brave man, as she called the

Doctor, for nothing. She had imbibed much of his determination, gentle and quiet as her usual demeanour was ; and she proved it, when the occasion arose.

CHAPTER VII.

Artists hold yon shapes but shadows,
Hovering round thy mounting way,
Tempting from thy track forechosen
On through other paths to stray ;
Burns thy young aim, upward climbing,
High above a guiding star,
Onward—onward earnest-hearted ;
Lo, but wildering lights they are.

W. C. BENNETT.

“ MARY, dearest Mary, what are you about at this moment, charming Miss Prue. Inditing an endless letter to that paragon of lovers, Walter the penniless? Silly girl, what *have* you been about? I declare you fancy yourself twice as wise as I am; that may be, but you are not half so *knowing*, for learn, Mary of my heart, that since I have been introduced into this great mass of confusion they call ‘society,’ I have been taught to distinguish between two things very accurately.

“ Do you remember that playing at sny-nimes, which Miss Fisher used to be so fond

of? Really that woman was not one of the ordinary sort. She was wise and knowing too, or I am mistaken; and as the man parted the oyster, giving each of the suppliants a shell, I think she did very much so by you and me—to you she gave the wisdom, and to me the knowing—but this, par parenthèse. Put your good head to work at these said synonimes again, and distinguish between wise and knowing.

“One thing is certain—wise, people may grow in the country—but knowing, they can only become in town—and wisdom brings with it all sorts of good but totally useless things as regards the world we live in—namely, disinterestedness, contempt of riches, value for numerous qualities which count for nothing—such as goodness, modesty, strong principle, tenderness of heart, and universal charity—and all this valueless baggage you find heaped together upon Walter the penniless—and so—so—dear, wise, and most unknowing creature, you have chosen *him*.

“And there you sit content to wait for no one knows what or when—but happy, in that your dear excellent heart is satisfied—when, had you but been *knowing*, you would at least

have tried a season in town first—when what would have happened do you think, I think? Why, then, I think you would have found it still more than I have found it—stale, flat, and unprofitable—and would have gone down again to Simcoe place more devoted to Walter the penniless than ever. I am already tired of this life—Why, if I were to love it, did my father and mother keep me down at that place all this time, and put Miss Fisher about me? Why did they suffer her, and that life together, to call forth in me wants and wishes which this life of society cannot ever gratify—these parties, and balls, and dinners, and breakfasts, and rides in Rotten Row—what are they?

“Shall I ever learn to like it? Perhaps as people do when they begin to take to wine, or smoking, or any other nasty thing which they at first find abominable—perhaps, like the rest, I shall not only get a sort of a liking for it in time, but it will become quite necessary to my existence.

“This is what my mother said—when I complained to her that I found town dull, and wanted to be home at Hurstmonceaux again.

“ ‘Dear child !’ she said, ‘ that is just as I felt myself at first, and yet I was as much admired as you are in my day—but never mind, you will soon become used to it—and find it at last impossible to exist out of society.’

“ Dear Mary, what a horrid thing *that* would be—worst of all.

“ But why do I go prating on in this tedious manner, about the dullness of town? Oh ! it’s no longer dull—it is become a charming place within these two days—so—

“ Such are the changes of mortal things—

“ Sometimes to better, sometimes to worse.

“ But in this case, at least, for better—life which seemed just sinking into a doze is wide awake enough now.

“ Mary, dear, you know—for I have not concealed that little truth from you, that I have been very much admired, and have produced quite a sensation, as they say, since I have risen upon this scene; and no young first appearance this season has equalled the splendour of mine. And you know, too, that I have had plenty of admirers, but not one true lover, like Walter the penniless: and that I admired some, rather, myself, but did

not really care a straw for any one of them;
and now

“ My dear Mary, I think the human heart is the strangest, strangest thing—and the real human story, I verily believe, if it could but be read in all its truth, which it never, never is—would exceed in interest—exceed in strangeness—in bizarrie—in contradictions—in every unaccountableness in short,—all that has been imagined, written, or sung, in the wildest or the most extravagant romances.

“ A trite remark, enough, as I perceive, now I have put it down—but things come just haphazard when I write to you

“ ‘ When will this girl have done prosing, and come to facts,’ I think I hear you say.

“ Well, it was at Mrs Wilton’s assembly—I had dined there with papa and mama—It was not a very dull dinner—many military and naval men were there, which I think always makes it pleasant—they mostly seem more simple and earnest than other people—the old ones, at least—those who have dealt with real death and danger in the great war—

The younger are, perhaps, not much better than the rest of us—mere idle triflers upon the earth's surface, with as little meaning in their life as in one of Mr Devigne's extempore fantasias on the piano-forte—remember you them?

“I sat by an old Admiral, as good luck would have it; and he, finding I was fond of the sea—for dear Algernon's sake—talked to me a good deal, and seemed to like the interest I took in what he said.

“Dear Algernon!—Ah! Mary—Why?—why?

“He has come home more charming than ever—such an elegant, fashionable, dare-devil. ‘Oh fie!’ says Miss Fisher—‘Lady Emma, pray do not let me hear you use such expressions.’ But it is just him; he would dare everything. They say he is brave as a panther—one's tired of Lion—in action: and I believe there is nothing he will not *dare*, either by land or sea.

“Now, it's vain to scold me—I do—I cannot help loving that sort of character; its very faults are interesting to me—that careless way of trifling with danger of all sorts—

of *all* sorts, even, Mary—mind that—it is to me so interesting—Courage!—Manly courage!—The courage to do wrong even—I am afraid the quality is so all in all to me.

“ ‘Ah Emma! ’ says my sweet Mary, and sighs.

“ Pity, though, fair saint, that your own taste did not run a little more that way. You might have done anything with Algernon—but now, poor fellow !

“ Well, let that pass—I will not tease you—we cannot help ourselves in these things. We are puppets that are played upon by mysterious powers—Why you, of all people, must prefer Walter the penniless, when you could have had Algernon, passes my comprehension and ever will—but forgive me, I am his sister.

“ Where was I? oh, at dinner—We will skip the rest of it and get up stairs, where I am sitting upon a little settee—causeuse, I forget the foolish name of it—driving down my yawns, and endeavouring to look civil, whilst Miss Marston is detailing the interesting circumstances of her sister’s wedding—wreaths and bonnets and veils and breakfast, and all

—when the gentlemen—that is some of the older and nicer ones, begin to come up from dinner, and as the best luck in the world would have it, a knot of these dear old prosers fell into talk just behind me.

“ You must know, if you read the newspapers, the brilliant action that has, not very long ago, taken place in Indian Seas. Nobody talked of anything else for a few days, but everything passes away in the ever-flowing stream of events here,—and I suppose, this would have died into silence like the rest of them, had it not chanced that the hero of the tale—a young, remarkably handsome man—and heir to a large fortune, came up to London when all the world was in town; and then the clubs, and the parties, and the everythings, could think and talk of nothing else.—

“ I cared little about it, till, as luck would have it, these dear old cronies of naval men, began to discourse of it just within hearing of me on my settee.

“ Mama says whatever one is, on no account to be rude—and Miss Fisher used to say the same thing in a somewhat

different fashion—but in spite of good instruction, rude was I as a bear.

“I fairly said hush to Miss Marston, turned my back *sans façon* upon her, and had eyes and ears only for these dear old men.

“One of them was telling the story so well ! Newspapers never relate a thing just as it occurred.—He was setting the matter right, and had to begin from the beginning.

“It was a seaman’s tale, full of sea phrases, I did not understand much of it, but I gathered, that, in the first place, never was cleverer seamanship shewn—that, in the second place, never was more heroic courage displayed—and in the third place, never more generous humanity.

“There was an episode about a dog !

“It brought the tears into the good old admirals’ eyes—You will not wonder they were in foolish mine.

“I twinkled them away as well as I could, but I was obliged at last fairly to steal the corner of my handkerchief to those traitorous little orbs, or I should have had the tears running down my cheeks.

“Pearly drops, in a London party !

“What propriety of place !

“I am not going to repeat the story of the dog—I should tell it so ill that I should spoil it.

“Sometime when we are over the fire, and your honour is in the humour, I will try for it—but not now.

“A pause.

“For we are coming to the critical moment of my life’s history, I verily believe.

“You know, Mary, how we both hate and despise girl’s talk about love and lovers—but I bore with you when you were in earnest, and you must bear with me.

“Love that is pretended, and fancied, and all that—oh ! what rubbishy, despicable stuff it is.

“But real love !

“Such as you bear to Walter !

“Such as I know now. Oh ! it is stronger than death, and mightier than the grave.

“There is something terrible in its very sweetness—something that makes the heart

shudder and tremble, even in the midst of its ineffable joy.

“ Some young men came into the room.

“ Among them was Algernon—and who with him ?

“ Edward Aubrey !

“ It seems to me as if it was almost happiness enough to write down the lovely name.

“ He was the young naval Captain that had done so well ; and he was the close friend of my own, dear Algernon.

“ Algernon soon brought him up to me.

“ ‘ And sweet sister,’ he said, with his darling smiling look as if he was so proud of me.

“ Ah, in that moment I *did* rejoice that I was beautiful—I did glory in my woman’s prize—my beauty ! when brought face to face with the glory of man.

“ I felt my face all in a glow—not in an ugly flush, but all in a glow—and I had more courage than he had, for his beautiful animated eyes—they are blue, Mary—they fell before mine—as if—shall I say it ?—as if mine dazzled him !—for—I really could not help it—I did look . . . well—pleased—I suppose I must call it.

“I sat down again upon this nice rounded settee; and Algernon came and stood opposite to me, chatting in his pleasant way. How I do love Algernon! And the young naval Captain stood by, a little retreating, so that I was obliged to turn round somewhat, not to leave him out of the conversation.

“I never saw such a sweet, charming expression as he has—So then, by and by, the rooms were cleared for dancing.

“And now comes the strangest part of my adventures. I don’t know what you will say to me, Mary, now. You will understand me as little as I do myself.

“You know I am far from being short-sighted as almost every body in the world is. I can see and distinguish, in a wonderful manner, even in imperfect lights. My Godmother, the Fairy, gave me the gift at my christening, I suppose.

“Well, the two young captains were talking to each other a little, and people, as I said, were clearing away in the other drawing-room, and as I turned to watch what was going on, I saw a gentleman upon the other side of the room, leaning against one of the

windows, and looking my way—looking, in short, at me.

“There was no mistaking the expression of his eyes—I do not pretend to deny that—and distant as we were from each other I could not help seeing it.

“He was a small man, rather below the middle size, but very delicately, I might say elegantly made. His face was pale, and nobody would call him handsome—and yet there was a strange fascination about that face—when you had once looked, it seemed impossible to help looking again.

“I could not, at least. When I did look again, his eyes were cast upon the ground; but I thought I never saw a more interesting countenance. However, I did not observe long, for charming Edward Aubrey came colouring and stammering,—and his bright sweet eyes telling all manner of pleasant tales—to ask me to dance—and I, of course, joyfully accepted—and rose, and took his arm—and then, I turned back to look at that other; but he was gone, and I saw him no more that night.

“I danced with Edward Aubrey.—Such dancing!—How unlike any dancing I ever

had before!—How we seemed to swim in happiness in the flow of that music which came sounding—sounding—and was the only reality to which I was sensible!

“But the evening came to an end at last, as all mortal things must do—and mortal felicity soonest of all—and Algernon and Edward Aubrey put mama and me into the carriage.

“And then—how unlike a romance where everything seems to conspire to make poor creatures wretched!—here, everything seemed to combine to make me happy—for we were scarcely comfortably shut up and on our way home, when mama began to talk about Captain Aubrey, and in such terms!—Saying he was the most delightful young man that she had ever seen—and rejoicing that he was a friend of Algernon’s, whom she had ordered to introduce him at our house—and, in short, giving pretty broad hints that she thought him a most eligible young man.

“You know what that implies, Mary—in this abominable slave-market where we are put up for the chance of the highest bidder.

“I feared mama might perhaps have expected something very grand from me—at

least till the bloom of the first season was gone by—but no!—she seems quite content with Captain Aubrey—and I am sure I should be.

“But now, Mary, there is more to tell.

“The next day, in due course, Edward Aubrey called with Algernon, just at the time my horse was about to be brought to the door; so, instead of riding along the Edgware Road with trusty Elias to look after me, behold me with my two handsome cavaliers parading it up and down Rotten Row—and very pleasant it was. We talked and laughed and enjoyed ourselves; and I was thinking of nothing but the present joke—when, lo! my eyes glancing at the walkers upon the other side of the rails, who should I see but the same gentleman I had descried the night before—he was walking our pace as we idly lounged along upon our horses, and I could not mistake the reason why.

“He was watching a foolish girl on horseback—with a cavalier upon each side of her—just in the same strange manner as the night before—but he was not aware, I am sure, that I saw him—yet I did, and my heart made a

strange stop and pause—and I felt myself grow a little sick and pale, as I should do, I fancy, if I saw a spirit. There was again, that strange mysterious feeling of relation with this man—so disagreeable!—I hope he has not magnetised me!

“ I turned again to Edward Aubrey, and talked with him to get rid of the impression—but somehow my gaiety was gone, and I was obliged to force myself to laugh, and seem at ease.

“ We came out of the park by Stanhope Gate. The two cavaliers a little in front of me, I following them, and when just as I was going to pass through the gate, came a carriage with runaway horses, starting so unexpectedly upon me that I quite lost my head, and should have been infallibly struck down and trampled under foot, had not a strong hand seized my bridle, and pushed back my horse so suddenly, that he almost fell. The carriage passed like a whirlwind, just missing my preserver, who stood for a moment looking down; whilst I, dizzy with terror, could scarcely keep myself from fainting, and my poor Jessy was shuddering and trembling in every nerve.

“As soon as I could recover myself a little, I bent down and thanked my preserver as well as I could; upon which he lifted up his face—for he stood there those few seconds immoveable as a statue—he lifted up his face—and what and whose should it be, but that of the very man I had seen before?

“His eye met mine.

“Oh Mary, what was there in those eyes of dark, deep grey?—What a look it was!—what intensity of passion!—of melancholy!—of subduing force!

“A shudder and trembling passed through me from head to foot. I felt the colour fly into my face,—I felt my eyes fall before his—I could only falter out something or other. I forget all that was said, but that look! that eye! I never to my dying day shall forget.

“You used to laugh at me and call me superstitious. Who would not grow superstitious who had lived the life I have lived? That wild, wild Hurstmonceaux! Those broad walks under the solemn oaks—those twilight rambles through the shady, trembling thickets, with the moon glistening on the sleeping lake—and the trees casting such deep,

mysterious shadows—and the creeping, stilly, whispering sounds—and the nightingale's strange, passionate chants—do you remember? How we would go, half-shuddering and hesitating along—fearful even though we were two together—almost believing that we saw the mysterious genii, the spirits of the woods in those vistas between the trees—this even when we were two together! But when you were gone away, and I used to stroll out of an evening by myself! I could quite persuade myself—nay, I am even now half persuaded—I did see strange realities—I did feel strange spiritual influences.

“ You seemed not to like to hear me talk in this way.—Ah, my Mary, you had chosen a better part; but upon me these superstitions, which you in your wisdom denounce as baseless and dangerous, have taken a strong hold.

“ People should not keep girls secluded in wild, remote, romantic places, if they mean them afterwards to be rational beings, instead of slaves to imagination. There is not a legend or a tale of whispering spirits—of haunting shadows—of second sight—of ghosts—of magnetism or of magic—which I do not feel

more than half inclined to believe. When you and Miss Fisher have reasoned about these things, and disproved their existence by laws of logic, laws of nature, and so on—you know how you and she talk—something within me has ever given you the lie.

“Something within has seemed to say that all you assert is very fine, very plausible; but that there is more in this living, breathing world about us than your notions would admit. Spiritual influences within us and about us that are not in this matter-of-fact way to be accounted for. In short, to use one of those expressions, trite, because they are immortal—

“There is more in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than is dreamt of in your philosophy.”

“You may put it as you will—turn and twist it as you will—I say that the influence exercised by that deep, mysterious eye over my feelings is most strange and unaccountable.

“It is not love—not any such thing; and I do not think you will imagine that it is, as it seems to me, a more deep, mysterious agency. Not that I despise love—I look upon a true

and sincere love as the most holy and sacred of things; but yet it seems to me trivial and common-place in comparison with this deeper interest.

“I thought I beheld at this moment the arbiter of my destiny—that I was under the influence of some irresistible power with which it would be vain to contend.

“As for him, he turned paler than ever. However, the other two came up, and Edward Aubrey introduced him.

“Introduced! — what a word! How strangely these every-day expressions and proceedings mix themselves up with higher and more spiritual imaginings. It is like the mingling of gold and clay in the great statue of the vision. Stay!—was it not iron? But never mind.

“Edward Aubrey introduced this man, so strangely interesting before—as who and what, do you think?

“His brother!

“His twin, and only brother!

“Now, sweet, incredulous Mary, wonder—do wonder. Is it not odd that this man who, unknown, excited such unaccountable

interest in me should prove to be neither more nor less than dear Edward Aubrey's *own twin brother*?

“ Dear Edward Aubrey! Yes, it is out—what is the use of mincing the matter?—dear to me past words! And this man is his brother!—his twin brother!

“ Edward wanted to lead my horse home, but this William—for that is his name—would not allow, saying, ‘ Edward was little acquainted with the management of horses,’ which was true enough; so Edward yielded, as I am persuaded everybody will and must do to this man, and he led my horse home.

“ Walking with his head bent down in a musing, meditative manner, silent as a ghost, which will not speak unless it is spoken to—and I was too dizzy, and felt too much shaken to wish to speak, so I was as silent as politeness would allow, and only uttered once or twice—and at such times he would lift up his face, and fix those deep, passionate eyes upon me for a moment, and then withdraw them again.

“ And so at last we got home.

“ Then I was Edward's once more.

“ Oh! it was so sweet, so strangely sweet,

to escape from the mystical, unintelligible influences of the one, to the cheering, open daylight sunshine of the other.

“I am his—I know I am, for life and death—and he is mine.

“Twenty-four hours, scarcely, since we first met, and he knows, and I know, that we are bound together for this life, and for ever.

“No, I cannot conceive that eternity itself can, in its ever moving circles, disclose a time when Edward Aubrey and his Emma will not be one.

“It is as if I had loved him ever since time began, and so should do till time was no more.

“You will understand this part of my story, if the other and more romantic portion is unintelligible to you. Your love for Walter, I think I have heard you say, seems to be of the infinite—without beginning or end. If you never said it, I am sure you must have felt it.

“I was interested by William, I don’t deny it; and he seemed to throw a strange influence of charm over me. But when sick, and faint, and scarcely able to stand, I laid hold

of Edward Aubrey's arm, and he pressed it—
Oh! so fondly and gently to his heart—there
came such a lightsome, wholesome, loving
feeling over me, I felt better directly—sup-
ported, and cheered, and comforted—and so,
so happy!

“Forgive me, best and dearest of Marys,
for these volumes. You say you love to have
them—and I love to send them. I love to
open my whole heart to you. And now,
sweet girl! send me some of your dear, use-
less, rational lectures, back in return.

“But don't scold me for giving away my
heart in such a hurry to Edward Aubrey—
for, indeed, I am quite sure that I have his in
return—and, besides, till you have seen him,
you cannot form a guess how irresistibly
charming he is.”

CHAPTER VIII.

The pride of human pomp and power—
Say lives it in this awful hour?
When false and failing, blank and drear,
The fairest dreams of earth appear,
And hope scarce triumphs over fear?

MRS ACTON TINDAL.

“YOUR brother is a delightful fellow, William, that every one must acknowledge; and he is just come ashore, after several years spent at sea.—He is young, spirited, and self-confident; loves pleasure, and has earned a right to enjoy it.—I am as sensible of all this as you can be; and I hope I am prepared for little things, that may not be altogether what I would—or you would most wish in him . . . But these absences—night after night—nights which I cannot find, at least, after a certain hour, are given to general society—to balls or parties, and such things, which it is natural enough, and where I wish him to be—these late hours unaccounted for, make me seriously uneasy—”

“I am no puritan,” Mr Aubrey went on; “I wish young men to see and know the world, and I am not, I hope—become a crabbed, selfish old man—envious of pleasures he can no longer share—but Edward’s manner of spending his time vexes and disappoints me—I looked for something different—something . . .

“Well—well young men will be young men.—But what of this Lord Algernon Mordaunt, with whom he seems so intimate. People shake their heads, and look mysterious when I mention his name. Is he or is he not a young scamp of fashion, with whom Edward had better have little to do?—or is he merely a young man of the world, going on in the way of other young men of the world—at whom the greybeards shake their heads ominously—though little harm comes of it after all.

“Tell me, William, what you know about this young man—and whether you are acquainted with the cause of the close intimacy subsisting between him and Edward?

“I do not recollect that his name was much mentioned in Edward’s letters,” he

added, after pausing a little to give William the opportunity to speak ; but no answer came.

The young man sat, thrown sideways upon his chair, listening to what his tall and stately father was saying, but with his face turned a little away, so as to conceal the expression of it.

At last Mr Aubrey, after having thus spoken, pausing frequently in his discourse, as if expecting an answer, but in vain—fairly stopped with,

“ What do you think of it ? Speak out, William.”

William then turned round, and presented his pale features, and troubled countenance, to his father.

Any other father might have observed the expression of suffering written on the face of the son before him ; but Mr Aubrey did not. His anxieties were all absorbed by the absent Edward. He was only intent upon drawing information from William upon a subject so close to his heart—he was accustomed to look upon this second son, merely as he stood in relation to the other.

William felt this indifference at the moment

more acutely than usual. He had long known how little he was to his father—nothing scarcely in comparison with his brother, but now, that he was really suffering—ill—and looking, as he knew, very ill—to see plainly that his father either saw not—or cared not, for one or the other, wounded him painfully.

“ Speak out, William,” he had said, and had fixed those stern intelligent eyes upon his son’s face. But he read nothing that was there. His thoughts were in another place.

“ Edward,” William at last began, “ is just as you say, sir. After some years spent, cabined up in a small vessel, he is enjoying the pleasures of liberty and society at home. It is natural—why should he not?”

“ That is an evasive answer, William. I apply to you. I have confidence in your judgment and observation. Tell me frankly what you have observed in your brother . . .”

“ I am no spy, sir,” said William.

“ Don’t use such odious terms to me,” cried his father, with some irritation. “ Who talks of spies?—I want nothing, which as a father—and a father justly anxious about his son

—I have not a right to require—from a man in whose opinions I place confidence. Tell me the truth at once, sir, and let me have no evasions—I hate them—What do you know of Lord Algernon?—What do you know of the way in which your brother spends his time?”

“As usual,” thought William bitterly; “when he can make use of me, and especially in any matter that regards my brother’s interests, I rise in value—I become ever an object to be won by civil speeches—when that is no longer the case, I drop into my accustomed insignificance.”

“I am not my brother’s keeper.”

“So said Cain,” remarked Mr Aubrey. “Will you give me no satisfaction?”

“If I could give you satisfaction I would . . . and yet stay,” making a violent effort—forcing himself, in spite of his jealous heart, to enter upon a subject that was killing him; “perhaps I *can* give you satisfaction upon one point at least—Edward’s increased intimacy with Lord Algernon—it arises, I believe, from attachment to his sister.”

“How! the Lady Emma!” with a start

of joy—and an expression of undisguised astonishment and pleasure, rarely to be seen upon his face.

“ You do not say so—the Lady Emma! and pray how do her friends receive it?”

William’s lips became white, as he answered :

“ I believe with every encouragement that can be given in such a case.”

“ That is agreeable intelligence, indeed!” said the father, recovering his usual composure, but looking excessively gratified—“ that *is* agreeable intelligence—nothing could give me greater satisfaction—a beautiful girl of high family! Whether there be money, I know not—and most certainly I care not. I shall do everything on my side to forward so desirable a connection—and you must help me, William.”

William felt sick and faint, and his face grew paler than ever, as he said, in a scarcely articulate voice :

“ I do not exactly see what *I* can do.”

“ Nor I neither, just at this moment; but circumstances are for ever arising which enable us to forward or to obstruct the

progress of such an affair.—You are in Edward's confidence, no doubt. Encourage him by every means in your power to persevere in the pursuit of this most desirable object. Tell him, if he care to know—and he has not the usual perverseness of youth, he *will* care to know—tell him that nothing on earth could give me greater satisfaction than to see him ally himself thus."

"And must it be my own brother," was again William Aubrey's bitter thought—"Must I be, not only an alien from my father's heart, but must I be driven from Edward's, or rather he from mine. Can I bear in feverish agony to witness his joy, his bliss triumphant—to gaze in jealous hatred at a happiness I ought to love and share—to see her another's—and his! Oh! any one's—any one's but his."

"What is the matter with you, young man?"—said his father, interrupting the deep reverie into which William was falling,——"What is the matter with you, young man?"

He started, as if suddenly roused from the deepest slumber.

"Matter with me?—Nothing."

“ Then you show a strange indifference to what should, one would have thought, next to myself, have been of the greatest interest to you—your brother—your twin brother’s happiness. But it is not the first time,” added Mr Aubrey, in a tone of severity, “ not the first time that I have remarked this selfish and egotistical insensibility to the welfare of my elder son.”

“ I was not aware of it.”

“ Then *be* aware of it—an eldest son, as the prop and roof-tree of the parental house—I look upon—as he ought to be looked upon—as he is regarded by all the rational part of world—as the object of most value and importance in the eyes of every member of that house. *His* good conduct and success reflect a lustre upon—as his failure and misconduct cast a shadow over, the whole of his family—upon his alliances the progress and advancement of that tree depends, of which the other members of the household are but as the lateral, and in comparison, insignificant branches.—But this is not the first time, William, that I have observed a certain coldness and indifference upon your

part, with regard to this subject so all-important to me—I hope, sir, I am not to attribute it to any baseless and fantastic whims entertained by certain theorists, who, in my opinion, have vastly too much influence in these times.”

William Aubrey was silent.

“Answer me,” said his father sternly, “you know, that I look upon silence at a moment like this to be but a form of revolt.”

“I am a younger son, myself, sir—”

“What do you mean by that?—A younger son!—I hope, I am not to hear any of the envious cant, too often now-a-days put into young men’s heads, about equality of rights—parental justice, and so on. I would have ‘you to know, sir,’ raising his voice, “that I admit no rights in my family but such as are founded upon my will—no claim of justice in the disposal of a fortune acquired by my own talents and abilities, but such as I choose to admit—Sir, the wisdom of the world has decided this question ages before either of us were born to discuss it, and if it had not been so—had I been the first to recognise the rights of primogeniture, I should

have done so--and have expected you, sir, to acquiesce in my decision."

William Aubrey only answered by a slight inclination of the head.

Mr Aubrey was a taciturn man, of cold, reserved manners, but when once excited to a certain degree, he would sometimes burst forth into the most passionate expressions.

Upon the present subject he was peculiarly irritable. His determination to make an eldest son, as it is called, of Edward, is so common a one, that it is not probable that his conscience upon that account would have troubled him. But he felt, and he knew, that it was not merely as his eldest son, that he showed this preference to Edward—but that in making him heir of his fortunes, he had likewise made him heir of his affections—had indulged an unjust partiality as well as followed a common rule—that he had not been—would not be—could not be,—just to his other son—that he thought little of his interests, and was indifferent to his happiness, and when he read in William's eye what he chose to consider unjustifiable resentment, at his following those laws of primogeniture

common to the world around him, but which he knew and felt, if he would have owned it, had a far deeper source—his irritation was excessive. He was a man of strong will, accustomed during the early part of his life, to bear down the puerile opposition of men of other climes and other natures, by the exercise of despotic authority—and in this way he had endeavoured to beat down the sturdy sense of wrong which at times was to be read in William Aubrey's eye.

On other occasions things would go on better between them—William was cool and reserved, and his father stern but civil. A certain respect for abilities and strength of character which each acknowledged in the other, might influence them imperceptibly to themselves, and at such times they got along tolerably well—as two men do who are obliged to respect, but cannot love each other.

There were moments, however, when the sense of his father's unkindness and injustice struck with more than usual force upon the feelings of William Aubrey, and at such moments, the father observing the symptoms of internal rebellion, which he was resolved never

to acknowledge as just, would be excited to the utmost irritation and anger.

So it came to pass now.

“Don’t bend the head in mock submission to me, sir,” he cried.

“There is no mockery intended,” William answered sarcastically. “It signifies that which is true—not acquiescence of reason—but submission to power.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Oh!” rising, as if about to leave the room; “you are too acute, sir, not to comprehend so simple a distinction.”

“Stay!—Let us have it out this once. Once more, for the five hundredth time, I think it is, I read proud defiance and dark censure in that eye of yours—What do you complain of?”

“Simply that it has pleased heaven to make a younger son of me. You would not have me such a mere insensible ass as to rejoice in such a lot—or such a hypocritical coward as to pretend that I did.”

“I would have you like wiser and better men if I could—not envious and jealous of the advantages possessed by others.”

“So I would have myself.”

“And why are you not what you would have yourself? Why are you not what you ought to make yourself?

“Because the same unknown, irresistible, mysterious power, which makes one man a being of stern, unconquerable will—and sent the warm stream of happiness, self-confidence, and courage, dancing through the veins of another—made me thoughtful—still and deep—a weigher of facts—no dupe of words—no slave of pretences—one who cannot and who will not accept names for things. As for envy and jealousy—they are the natural growth of one heart—just as indifference to justice may be the growth of another—just as an unreflecting enjoyment of the fruits of injustice may be the portion of a third.”

There was a pause of a few moments.

Then Mr Aubrey, recovering his ordinary composure of manner, said—

“William Aubrey—you are a match for me.”—

He mused a few moments more—and then, with unusual cordiality of tone he added—

“Go forth, my son—struggle with the world and subdue it as I have done—and after you have subdued it—use your power despotically—without owning responsibility to any—as I have hitherto done and intend henceforward to do.”

And, saying this, he rose and left the room.

After the momentary irritation had subsided, he did not seem in the least degree agitated by this conversation. To measure his proceedings by the standard of right and justice was foreign to every habit of his mind. He had a sort of intuitive eagle glance, which took in at once a wide circle of things—but when once his mind was settled upon any point—it was a vain attempt to turn him. His conduct, with regard to his two sons, had become the habit of his mind—he thought no more of it than, by those among whom so much of his life had been spent—it is esteemed unjust that this man shall be born a Brahmin and that a Pariah.

When the repose of his conscience was disturbed by the behaviour of his plain-spoken younger son, he would be aroused

for the moment to violence — but the passion subsided as rapidly as it arose, and he returned to his usual course of action, devoting the whole energy of his character to the advancement of the interests of his future representative—leaving the other son to get along just as he could and would.

His father had left the room, and William remained sitting where he left him.

Now the man who remains—the man who keeps the field after such an encounter, is the man who is worsted. It is the mark of victory to walk away—this power to resist the almost frenzied temptation to continue the war of words,—being, indeed, proof of a certain triumph of that self-command which is as the rampart to the Great City of Life. It is true the father, by one imperious sentence, had commanded William to remain where he was—and listen to what it pleased him to say—but the young man was not prepared, after his own last bitter reply, to find the contest so suddenly brought to an end.—His father's self-command astonished him—he respected it and he was humbled by it—he felt worsted.

This feeling only increased his irritation—

only deepened the shadows that were darkening over his soul—closing every beaming prospect—as one sees the black thunder-clouds gradually gathering round the horizon until all is wrapt in gloom.

That one bright spot—that one—the eye which had fallen under his! the faltering voice, that one moment of mysterious emotion which had told him, in spite of all, that something in him there was which possessed a strange magnetic power over Lady Emma—something almost persuading him that a love deep as his, must, nay had, forced an answering sentiment—the vague superstitious hope which had been as the one bright spot in his cloudy heavens—that too had vanished.

He knew his father well. He was a man of power and determination, sufficient to carry every point upon which he had set his mind—and common sense pointed out at once that in the present case, everything was so reasonable,—so exactly in accordance with what must be the natural desire of all parties concerned, that there really was not the shadow of a difficulty to be removed.

Edward had but to speak, and his father had but to declare his intentions in his favour —to render him an acceptable suitor in almost any family, however noble. Far more in one like this, at once very noble and very needy.

It was the morning of the day upon which the ball was to be given at the Marchioness of Hurstmonceaux's, that the scene above related took place—each of the brothers had received a card.

William had anticipated this evening with a strange mixture of pleasure and pain. To see her again—see her, in her triumphant loveliness—look once more upon that sweet, gay, animated face—even this was rapture. Moreover he had resolved to dance with her. He was little of a dancer, but what mattered that? He would take one turn with her—just sufficient to secure her as a partner; then he would have her hand within his arm, and he should lead her down those steps upon which the ball-room windows opened, and through the groves of that park-like garden,

and down by the sleeping water, and while the nightingales were singing, and the pale, round moon calmly shining,—he would speak and try his power.

Try what she was, and what he was.

He had in his way a determination as courageous, as resolute, as iron,—as Mr Aubrey himself.

But now as he sat there, his resolution began to waver.—Should he, in defiance of his father's declared wishes,—of what must be the wish of her parents,—of what must be her own best interest, and his brother's best interest,—should he endeavour to thrust himself into this circle of joy, an ominous intruder—and substitute, if in his power, confusion, and distraction of opinion and feeling—hesitation and doubt, and jealousy, in place of all this straightforward affection and happiness.

Hope had forsaken him. The glaring absurdity—the ridicule of setting up such pretensions as his, in opposition to those of his brother, struck him now as the act of an idiot, rather than of a rational being. And if it were vain, as it was odious, openly

to contend for the field, why not give place at once?

Why—as all the laws of honour, both in love and arms, forbade—maintain a contest which was utterly hopeless, and which could result only in an amount more or less of gratuitous pain to all parties?

Why not retire as a man of spirit ought to do—as a man with his heart in the right place would have done?

CHAPTER IX.

“ Deliver me from the fallacies of the world, from my own folly, that I be not cheated by the one, nor betrayed by myself.”—JEREMY TAYLOR.

It was a night such as William’s poetic fancy had painted it.

The moon had risen, bright, round and clear; yet the stars might be seen through the air—soft glittering spangles upon the blue spreading sky!

The evening was warm as that of Italy, when two lovers sat and gazed at those patterns of rich gold upon the floor of heaven—Not a breath was stirring—The splendid villa, or rather palace in the Regent’s Park, stood surrounded by tufted groves and shrubberies, its long front one galaxy of lights.—From the saloon, which was the dancing room—a vast lofty apartment one

blaze within—those broad steps descended, which reached along the entire centre of the front, stretching out into long wings on either side. These steps were adorned with innumerable flowers, visible as if it were day, such were the floods of light which illuminated the whole of the large pavilion which this centre in some sort represented—The sound of music heard from the saloon filled the air, and festive groups, masked or unmasked, as the case might be, in all the grotesque variety of a masked and fancy ball, were crowding in and out of the wide-opened windows, ascending and descending the steps—or winding among the bowery walks of the gardens, which were glittering with coloured lamps on every side.

The Marchioness of Hurstmonceaux, who rarely gave parties, piqued herself, when she attempted such a thing, upon giving the best of the season.

Lady Emma was loveliness itself. In a wreath of lilies of the valley mingled with delicate little wood-flowers so light and faintly tinted, just like the flowers which everyone who loves the woods, knows and loves.

She wore a dress of mingled paly green and white, her beautiful hair flowing around her in a way which could not have been allowed at any but a fancy ball. Her eyes were bright with innocent enjoyment, as, with the light steps of the wood nymph she represented, she glanced from place to place more like a vision than a reality. By her side, as her shadow, the young naval officer might be seen, unmasked, and his dress uniform of white and blue (for uniforms were admitted as fancy dresses), showed off his figure to the highest advantage.

He knew nothing of love's artifices, not he. He adored her, and he showed it, without disguise. In some, this might have appeared obtrusive and ill-bred,—not so in him. It was all so spontaneous, so simple, so unaffected—such a matter of course. The world seemed to agree to accept it so, and to look upon them as engaged lovers, though not a word of that nature had he yet ventured to say.

Those, who knew him little, were struck with the ease, and, to use an old, almost obsolete word, the gallantry of his manner.

There was that in it of observance, of respect, of devotion, which young men of the world have agreed to discard, but which, when united with a manly freedom and spirit, will always produce its effect upon women. His blue eye too was so bright, his smile so sweet, the expression of his countenance so charming ! Yet had any friend who really loved him been present, one who cared to observe the slight but expressive changes which time insensibly produces upon the countenance, he might have felt grieved and anxious at the indications to be discerned there.

That clear, ingenuous eye was no longer the same. Bright it was—and fervent it was—but there was no longer that perfect, lucid, confiding frankness for which it had once been remarkable. Clouds came and went over that once open and cheerful brow; and the countenance was from time to time obscured by a certain troubled darkness. For a moment the pensive, anxious, uneasy expression would be there,—then he would shake it off,—and would chat and laugh with his usual animation—with more, per-

haps. But the laugh seemed less sweet,—less gay,—less natural,—and the pleasant stream of unaffected conversation had lost its easy flow.

It was when he was gazing upon Lady Emma that this change of expression was the most visible. Yet it was evidently not the melancholy anxiety of a doubting lover. There seemed to be something behind.

And, alas ! most true—there was something behind.

Edward was no longer the same. He had suffered himself to be betrayed by the ruling fault of his nature—facility—into courses which were as offensive to his taste as contrary to his principles—if principles, indeed, he could be said to have. His should rather be called good instincts than good principles, for his nature was most happy—but his moral education, properly so styled, had yet to begin.

His childhood had been entirely neglected.

Those great ideas of responsibility to a higher power—of watchfulness, self-denial, and self-distrust, which enable the man

to pass with an undeviating rectitude through the labyrinth of life, had never been inculcated. And perhaps, under these circumstances, the very possession of those naturally good dispositions with which Edward was gifted, became injurious—it served to disguise to him the extent of his moral wants.

Natures high and magnanimous, as the one before us, are apt to be too facile in matters they consider of indifference. They are often exceedingly easy and good-natured, as it is called,—and Edward was particularly so—besides the tempter was the brother of the girl he adored; and passion acting upon a heart like his, shed more than the usual delusive charm over everything that was in any manner associated with its object.

Edward loved Lord Algernon for Emma's sake, and suffered this unprincipled young man to lead him from one step to another, until he found himself involved in engagements which his conscience and judgment disapproved—and which, though as yet no particular mischief had arisen, he felt would awaken—were they known—so much

just anxiety upon the part of his father and brother.

But night after night was thus passed away until at length the fatal fascinations of play began to involve him. What he had originally done, merely in complaisance to Lord Algernon's wishes, was now continued to gratify his own. He was very clever—of a highly ardent and enterprising temper, and, like too many young men in his position in life, he had at present no earthly thing to do. He wanted an interest—a pursuit—something to stimulate his spirit. He found it, alas! where so many others, once good and innocent as he, have found it.

To play whist, exerting all the skill which the game demands—to bet high!—and tremble at the danger of losing sums, which he knew his father would be justly displeased at his having risked—and which, rich as he was, it might inconvenience him, if lost, to pay . . . the very excitement of the danger possessed an invincible charm—whilst to extricate himself from the perils he incurred, by the exercise of his own exceeding skill, was a delight irresistible.

Every morning brought its compunctionous visitings for this conduct, and with them resolutions not to offend again—those vain, half resolutions with which, and not with honest good intentions, hell, as it has been said, is paved. Such half resolutions do not even reach the point of honest intention—far less do they result in real action—they serve merely to satisfy the gnawings of that sort of conscience which depends very much upon the state of the nerves, and may be laid asleep by a hearty meal or a gallop in the fresh air.

Still, though thus, in a manner, silenced and stupified, the good monitor was never altogether to be laid at rest ; and there was a sense of internal dissatisfaction with himself, ever present. Oh, how unlike to the happy consciousness of useful and honourable endeavour, with which he had walked the deck of his vessel, gladdening every eye that beheld him !

Had he been soundly educated—his moral nature developed as it ought to have been—had Edward Aubrey been taught to look upwards—the true model been placed before his eyes—had he, in short, been a Christian man,

instead of a mere member of a Christian society—these evils could never have arisen—the temptation would have been resisted at first, had the habit of early resistance been acquired. But he wanted the faithful compass, the unerring guide. He was there—a beautiful vessel, exposed to all the waves and winds—the shifting lights and fallacious signals of a world, in which, with the best compass, and the best pilotage, it is so hard to steer aright.

The internal dissatisfaction that was growing upon him was more peculiarly felt this evening.

Surrounded as he was with all, to his fine perceptions, so peculiarly delightful—and allowed, nay more, encouraged, to devote his time and attention to the sweet object of his admiration—at this moment more than ever sweet and charming—this dissatisfaction, this discontent with himself, became peculiarly galling and oppressive.

How happy but three weeks ago—how perfectly, how supremely happy would all this have made him! — but was he happy now?

He did not even ask himself the question. He was quite unaccustomed to this sort of self-inquisition. He suffered the undying worm to keep gnawing there within, without calling himself to account—these uneasy feelings to haunt him without troubling himself to ask why. But she was not so easily to be satisfied.

She had, once or twice, when looking up at him, perceived the cloud darkening over the countenance, once so frank and gay, the bright expression exchanged for one of suffering and care, and she was struck and affected by it. Her woman's instinct told her that it was not upon her account. There was a change, but she was not the cause of it; and she felt privileged, as they walked up and down the room, her arm pressed closely to his breast, to ask the cause.

Lady Emma was of a frank, open temper. She had been brought up in the retirement of the country, and she knew little of mere conventional reserves.

She perceived that Edward was not exactly as he had been; and she saw no harm in asking what had happened.

With that arm of hers pressed so closely to his heart, she felt she had the right to take the interest she did in his happiness.

“I have been looking at you several times, Captain Aubrey,” she began, “and I have been thinking what a changeful countenance yours is. At times it is gaiety itself, and you seem the happiest of beings; then, suddenly the sky darkens over . . . You are like an April day.”

The blood rose suddenly to his temples, then as suddenly retreated.

The arm was pressed more tightly to his heart, as he answered:

“And are you so exceedingly, exceedingly kind as to observe my change of looks?—and can you care—may I dare hope it—for my clouds or sunshine? Oh! it rests with one, and with one only, to make mine a perpetual sunshine.”

No man should ever call a woman *kind*. It always sounds to her sensitiveness like a tacit reproach.

Lady Emma blushed in her turn, and loosened her arm a little; then she bashfully raised her eyes, and stole a glance at her

lover's face. What she read there made her no longer ashamed of being *kind*.

There was a silence for a short time, then he said :

"I have had cause to be dissatisfied with myself."

He paused a little, and thus went on :

"When a man has only himself to answer to, he cares little—perhaps too little—whether he is pleased with himself or not. But it shall be so no more with me."

"I can hardly believe it possible," she said with great simplicity, "that you should ever have cause to quarrel with yourself."

"Who has not?—and I most of all," was his answer, and then he looked down again at her with oh ! such intense tenderness!—and he felt the little arm trembling in his.

He took the hand which lay upon his arm, and he pressed it gently, and he was about then and there, surrounded as they were, to declare his passion, and ask for that heart which he believed to be already his own . . . but at that critical moment—ah ! that mysterious thread of moments upon which life hangs !—Emma's governess came up and interrupted

them. She said, that the Marchioness of Hurstmonceaux was calling for her daughter, to be introduced to, and dance with, the Prince of C. C., she believed it was—and so, with considerable hurry and fuss, she carried her away.

Our Marchioness was a shrewd woman, and had she been aware how matters stood, nothing could have made her more angry than this blundering interruption of a conversation which was becoming so interesting. Princes might dance with her daughter, and it was well that they should—it gave the young creature a certain *éclat* which was valuable. But the Lady of Hurstmonceaux was not one to drop the substance and grasp at the shadow. She knew that Captain Aubrey was an excellent match and a sure card—that it was one of those affairs which may be called a real good thing; equally eligible on both sides—one of those schemes which may almost inevitably be brought to bear—Yet, secure as she felt, she would have been not the less glad to see all things comfortably settled, by a regular engagement, so that she might be able to lay the subject

aside, and turn her mind undisturbed to other pressing matters, which troubled her much, and with good reason.

But worthy Miss Fisher, who, unfortunately, had, by Emma's desire, been invited this evening, was not quick-sighted in love matters, and not being in the Marchioness's confidence, she blundered as we have seen.

Captain Aubrey very unwillingly relinquished Lady Emma's arm, suffering Miss Fisher to lead her away; and as it was for the purpose of being introduced to the principal personage present, he did not choose to follow her; so he turned away vexed, and, if truth must be told, excessively jealous—and he went and sat down in a corner of the room, by the side of one of the large windows looking towards the garden, from whence he could watch the whirling waltz going on within, or gaze upon the calm and beautiful night, and the various groups wandering about the grounds without.

The scene was fantastical and grotesque—masks always give a peculiar appearance of oddness and unreality to people upon such occasions—he was in no very good

humour, and he sat looking at the people as they went in and out, and making somewhat sarcastic reflections as they passed to and fro. At last his attention was arrested by a figure, dressed as a German broom girl, her face entirely covered by a mask, which she kept most pertinaciously on.

The figure was standing upon the steps, and seemed absorbed in thought, taking no notice of the crowds as they ascended and descended, sometimes even jostling her, but when thus driven from her position, she resumed it immediately.

She seemed to be quite unaccompanied, and to belong to no party. Every now and then, however, she raised her eyes, and, as he fancied, fixed them upon himself, keeping her face turned towards the place where he sat. He was just about to move away, and put an end to this kind of disagreeable scrutiny, when, his eyes following the direction of hers, he became aware of two figures approaching.

The lovely Lady Emma was re-entering the dancing room, leaning upon the arm of a young man much taller than herself, so as to

bear the just and beautiful proportion to her fine and slender figure. He was dressed in the splendid Hungarian costume, and literally blazing with jewels. He held his mask in his hand, and a face was thus displayed which appeared the very ideal of manly beauty, enhanced by the grace and elegance of the most splendid figure in the world. He was, in short, a proper peer for the lovely girl who hung upon his arm, and it would seem as if everyone acknowledged this—the crowd falling back in a sort of admiring gaze, as these two fine creatures came forward to take their places in the dance.

They began to dance, and it was, indeed, a very beautiful sight.

The dress and figure of the cavalier so magnificent, and the light, glancing, and fairy-like creature who floated away as if her feet scarcely touched the earth, so lovely—

She thought and cared little for all this, but her eyes were bright and her countenance beaming—she was sure that Edward loved her, and that this very grand young man was perfectly charmed with her—and true enough he did feel a little in danger

of parting with his heart, which, like an ordinary piece of coin, had gone into circulation and come back to him so often. He was not accustomed to disguise his admiration when excited, and he made no secret of it now.

The waltz seemed to Edward Aubrey as if it never would come to an end.

He sat there, like one stupified by some sudden and unexpected shock, gazing vacantly at this magnificent apparition which had arisen, as it were, suddenly, between him and the object of his passion, casting him down at once from the happy elevation to which the general esteem and admiration of the world had elevated him—sinking him to a mere nothing before the young and handsome magnate.

Edward Aubrey felt, at that moment, very much as men in mythic times must have felt, when the divinities in person descended from Olympus, to enter the lists with poor creatures of clay, and bear away the prizes in love and war.

These high-blooded, high-born, highly accomplished beings, who belong to the ancient, unadulterated aristocracies of ages, may not,

perhaps, be ill compared with those divinities of the antique world, in whom the men of those times—it may be from some vague tradition of superior races—believed.

To the worshippers of ideal beauty—to those who, like some of us even at this time of day, regard personal beauty as something sacred, and inestimable, and in itself to be revered, not as the ornament of, but as the essential good (of these I profess myself not to be one)—a being like this is transcendental.

Captain Aubrey, however, did not feel himself in the least inclined to worship beauty in the form of the Prince, however much he might in that of Lady Emma.

Black, bitter jealousy was at this moment turning all the sweetness of his nature into gall, as he kept his eyes fixed, riveted upon the pair.

That dance!—that odious dance!—would it never come to an end?

Oh yes, it would end—it is already ended—and they are arm in arm again—and they are coming his way.

The puppy!—The proud conceited puppy!—The rascal foreigner!—Woman!—woman!

—woman!—Flirt!—jilt!—trifler!—His brain was reeling—his heart raging as they passed him. The young Hungarian bending down his proud, beautiful head, and speaking in tones so soft and low—and she, with her cheek faintly flushed by the exercise—a tinted lily—her eyes bent on the ground, hanging on his arm listening—and so softly smiling!

Oh, that ineffably sweet smile!

And she never once looked up—though she passed close by him—neither hearing nor caring.—Was he forgotten already?

They passed, and he rose and came towards the steps where the woman, dressed as the “Buy-a-Broom,” was still standing.—

“Do you know me?” she began with the usual freedom of the mask.

“Not in the least,” he said, and was about to pass her.

“But I know you,” she answered, just moving so as to prevent him from going on, without unduly pushing against her.

“I know you—and I am sure you know me.”

“I assure you I do not in the least—and if you know me, it is because I am without

a mask, so that any one who chooses to take the trouble to enquire, may learn my name; but I never, to my recollection, heard your voice before.”

“Very possibly. . . . Then, on honour, you do *not* know me? Will you give me your honour upon it?”

“If it is any satisfaction to you—yes.”

“Because I have something to say to you.”

“Say on.”

“Something which concerns your good—for I have read your heart—yes—I know more of you than you suppose—and now I warn you—turn your eyes away in time. Look before you! Ask yourself—can you pretend to rival such a man! You are a handsome, pleasant young fellow enough—nobody denies that—you know and do your duty—you are brave, loving, and true; but what’s all that? *He* is a Prince, beautiful and deceitful, bred in courts, flattering, and false, but fascinating, and a foreigner!—And you will set up your claims and pretensions against his, will you?”

“You need not stop me to tell all this

—I have been feeling it, without your help, this last half hour,” he answered bitterly, surprised out of his self-command for the moment.

“ You have!—I thought so!—Then listen to me.—Edward Aubrey, you are too good to be the sport of a vain, heartless girl—but if you are not careful, you will be. . . . Young man, when you have learned to know the sex as I have, you will find that there are faults—nay, there are vices—which are charms in their eyes.—Only look yourself—and see whether in this one less than half an hour, you do not know that she has changed to you—you, Edward Aubrey—you, honest and sincere as you are—aye, honest enough, and sincere enough—but what woman ever loved a man for *that*? ”

Edward’s blood was already boiling—the venom thus administered seemed to drive him almost mad—he was beside himself with rage and jealousy.

He looked the way the mask bade him—and, sure enough, he thought, who could mistake the expression of that face!

“ Nay,” the tempter in female form went on—“ If you are not satisfied—go and be

satisfied—try her—go and speak to her—See how she will seem to like it—See what welcome you will have—Why? can you suppose that, brought up by such a mother, she does not know very well what she is about?—and can you imagine that mother will ever rest now, till she brings this matter to bear? Princess C. C.! It will sound a little better, I imagine, than Lady Emma Aubrey.”

“Come, Algernon! Are you not tired to death of all this fiddling, piping, and masquerading? Let us go and amuse ourselves like men.”

Lord Algernon had his own reasons for changing his tactics, and was now as desirous to get Edward Aubrey away as he had of late been to bring him and his sister together. He acquiesced readily.

“My good fellow, I have been sick of all this nonsense an hour and a half ago—so let us get our hats, and steal a march—we shall never be missed.”

“Never be missed,” Edward repeated bitterly to himself.

“And if mama should find us out,” Algernon went on, “Why she’ll suppose we are only gone to change our dresses and get masks, which I’ll swear, if interrogated, was the truth. But hold! Really it might be capital fun to do that. I have ten thousand minds.”

“No—no,”—said Edward, putting his arm into Lord Algernon’s, and pulling him along.

“I tell you I’m sick of it all. Let us go to the Club and have our revenge.”

“As you will,” answered the other.

And for the first time Edward was the seducer to the fatal board.

CHAPTER X.

“Enough.
To pluck commiseration of his state
From brassy bosoms, and rough hearts of flint,
From stubborn Turks and Tartars never train'd
To offices of tender mercy.”

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

THEY were gone.

The festivities continued.

The bands played with increased animation; the night, as it deepened, seemed to increase in beauty; a soft wind played among the leaves and flowers, and the nightingales were revelling in song.

The stars were shining large and bright in the heavens, the tiny lamps glittering like thousands of glow-worms below.

That young enthusiastic creature, so alive to the beauty which surrounded her, was anything but what the mask had described her to be—anything but a worldly schemer and calculator—for she was the mere child of

imagination and passion, and resembled any creature on earth rather than her mother.

We left her, the young, beautiful, imaginative, and inexperienced girl, descending the steps which led to the gardens, hanging upon the Prince of C. C.'s arm.

Flattered she was—perhaps for the moment a little touched, as women are but too apt to be, by the devotion of any one whose devotion is esteemed an honour—but it was the mere excitement of the moment—and there was the faithful woman's feeling at the bottom of it—for, even as she went down those steps, her colour heightened, and her eyes sparkling, she looked round for Edward.

She looked round to see whether he was there to observe her triumph, and gloried in thus enhancing the value of a heart which was all his own, by giving proof of the disinterestedness of its affection.

How many women every day, from poor Camilla Tyrrel on board the yacht, to the victim of yesterday, have made the same mistake, and lost the heart they so highly prized, by the indulgence of this somewhat sentimental vain glory.

But he was not there—at least, not in the place where she had left him. She was a little disappointed not to see him, but not in the least alarmed. Little did she guess all that had been passing in his heart, or the manner in which he would soon be passing his time.

Throwing desperately at hazard—

He had abandoned his favourite whist table, and there he stood, with pale cheek and haggard eye, watching the turn of the dice, and betting madly—not with the gambler's passionate hope, and fierce hunger of gain—but with the vain endeavour to distract his mind, and annihilate one passion by another.

It was the first time in his life that he had experienced the racking torments of jealousy—of disappointed love—and all the rage and despair which belong to that form of anguish, and little knew he how such fierce agonies of the heart are alone to be met and subdued.

Had it been bodily pain, danger, imprisonment, suffering under any mere physical form, he would have endured it with fortitude and calmness—but against his present feelings he was helpless as a child—weak as the

feeblest of cowards—reckless and desperate as the most untutored savage.

So there he stood, his temples aching as if they would burst, his eyes wild and staring, urging on the frantic game with the fury of a maniac.

Lord Algernon marvelled at the change—half rejoicing, half regretting that the work seemed so effectually done, and that the man whom he had been accustomed to regard as a model—whose conduct had ever been a tacit censure upon his own—was now being swept away, and a victim to the dire passion of gaming, and with an apparent defiance of consequences which astonished him.

He stood observing him some time in silence. And now, fortune seemed to rejoice in her new votary, and to welcome him with her highest favour—heaps of gold began to accumulate to an enormous extent before Edward. Then Algernon seemed suddenly to be seized with the same frenzy—he began to bet upon the throws of his friend with an equally desperate disregard of calculation—and soon heap upon heap, and notes to a very large amount began to accumulate before him also.

Long this desperate game went on. Thirsty and fevered, they kept calling for wine, and drinking eagerly; then they threw again—and still as they threw the most extraordinary run of luck attended them. At last almost mad with excitement, Algernon proposed to stake all their winnings upon one final chance. The challenge was accepted, but the sum in question was so large, that a sort of partnership was entered into among the standers-by, who divided the risk among them.

One well-experienced calculator, however, took the largest portion of the bet.—Reasoning upon the doctrine of chances, which answers so well upon paper—he assured himself, as far as assurance is possible in such cases, that the probabilities of a high throw must be greatly against one who had met with such unparalleled success during a whole evening—it was almost impossible, according to all the rules of calculation, but that the tide of fortune must turn.

The two young men, who were, themselves, also now playing in partnership, declared, that they had no wish to leave the table, winners to so large an amount—but that it was to

be understood that the present was their last throw for that night; winners or losers, they should then leave the table.

The cool and experienced calculator stood there, with thoughtful, unmoved face, watching the eager impassioned looks of the young men around—the greedy eyes of Algernon, who was well-known to him, fixed upon the heaps of gold and notes lying before him on the table, and the wild, excited air of the young naval officer, a comparative stranger. Wary and composed, he kept repeating to himself—“The tide must turn.”

True, perhaps, but not for that night.

Edward handed the box to Algernon.

“Throw, you,” he said.

But the gentleman above mentioned interfered—

“I withdraw my bet, if the hands that throw are changed.”

“Are you mad?” whispered Algernon, “with such a run of luck in your favour—to pass the box to me.”

“Be it as you will,” answered Edward carelessly.

He raised his hand as he spoke.

The dice fell upon the table.

He has won!—

The eyes of Lord Algernon flashed with a fierce, hungry joy—Edward turned silently away.

He cared not to calculate his gains. As the cry arose that he had won—it was as if a sharp poignard had entered into his heart. He had sought at that table distraction, not gain, and now as the flood of fortune poured in upon him, with it came the miserable thought—“It is worse than valueless—it is no longer for her.”

To have lost—to have been plunged into all the misery of money embarrassments, of his father’s anger, and his brother’s quiet disapprobation—to quarrel with them, with the world, with everything, and fly for shelter to his ship—that was what he was panting for. The voice of the winds and waters was sounding in his ears—a refuge from his intolerable misery.

He had firmly believed when he risked this last throw, that he should lose—and he had won!—He knew not what—cared not what—he had won to an immense amount.

He turned away, and his eye fell upon one of the large mirrors against the wall, reaching from ceiling to floor, and there he saw reflected, not only his own fevered excited face, but the haggard countenance of a very young man, who stood there the picture of dismay, and as if thunderstruck at his own losses.

He was a mere boy.—A slender, delicate, raw, feeble-looking youth, whose hair, pale and scanty, stood almost on end; and whose features, simple to childishness, were distorted with agony. The agony of a feeble spirit, wherein all that supports the man is swept at once away. His hands were clasped convulsively before him, his cheek was ashy pale, his eyes staring, his white lips quivering.

Weakness of character is a contemptible and ridiculous thing, but when the weak are driven to hopeless despair, the excess of their agony almost renders it sublime.

This poor, raw lad was one just sent from a private select establishment, to a fashionable college at one of our Universities. The school was one to which the father, at once a rigid

dissenter and a very proud and vain man, who had made his own large fortune, had consigned his son, with the idea of escaping the dangers of a public school, and from thence he had launched him at once into the vortex of university life. The poor sensitive youth found it difficult to stand his ground, untrained as he had been to assert himself, and hold his own against the violence or the ridicule of the many, and he soon from mere fear—the fear of not being thought manly—launched into courses, considered desperate even by those who held law and order at equal defiance.

Among other of his silly ambitions, it had been one of the first to become a member of this present fashionable gambling club,—he had succeeded, and this was only the second night of his appearance upon these boards. Seeing other young men, whom he admired and emulated, joining in this chance against the man with the run of luck,—he had vauntingly put down his name for a much higher portion of the risk than he was the least able to meet, and he had lost!—and more by thousands than there was the

slightest probability of his finding any means whatsoever to pay.

His father !

He trembled even to think of his father—that stern, despotic father, to whose severity he was probably indebted for the moral weakness and cowardice that had been his ruin. What would become of him ? What should he do ?

Put a pistol to his head ? . . .

But at that idea his cheeks grew more blanched than ever, and his teeth rattled within his jaws.

Such was the picture of despair which greeted Edward, as he turned from the gaming table.

And at that sight, a feeling of horror came over him. For the first time in his life he knew what it was to hate and abhor himself.

He, in his restless defiance of what was wrong, in his frenzied impatience to escape a present misery, had been the cause of hurling a fellow creature down the fearful abyss into which it was plain this poor, pale, helpless, half-idiot had fallen.

But Edward's heart was good, in spite of his many faults, and the weakness which others, more hardened, might have laughed at, aroused in him a feeling of sincere, almost tender pity, and he could not refrain from going up to the poor chap-fallen simpleton, whom, but five minutes before, he recollected as so vain and boasting. The lad had fallen a few paces back from the crowd round the table, where every body was talking loud, and amid a confused hubbub of voices, Lord Algernon was quietly arranging in bundles and rouleaux the Bank notes and sovereigns before him.

“ You seem very uncomfortable”—Edward began, speaking as a man might do to a mere boy—“ I wish you could point out any way in which I might be able to serve you.”

Two great school-boy tears ran down the miserable lad's cheeks, then a flush of burning shame followed; then a feeling of anger at being thus addressed by the man who had won his money; then a fear of being thought raw and a child.

He did not lift up his eyes, as one more practised might have done, and scowl down

what he considered a very impertinent piece of compassion, but he turned sulkily away, shaking his head and muttering—

“I want nothing from *you*.”

And so he left the room.

But his agonised, foolish face haunted Edward like a spectre—and when, at last, he was called upon to come to the table and receive his portion of the gains—sick and disgusted he looked with horror upon their amount—whilst Algernon, suddenly looking up from business, cried,

“There is one wanting—The second on the list—Mountford!—he’s not paid.”

There was a general exclamation of “Where the deuce is he?”

“I saw him but a moment ago,” says one.

“Stolen away, stolen away! by Jove,” cries another.

“That will never do. No, no, my young master. If you *will* keep company with men, you must learn, that scores must be paid and engagements kept.”

And several young men hurried out of the room and down stairs.

They soon returned, two of them hauling

in the poor trembling caitiff; he looked only half alive.

His only idea, when he left the room so hastily, had been that of scorning assistance, and acting, as he imagined, in a very high-spirited manly manner. He never dreamed of being suspected of the endeavour to run away from his responsibilities, little as he knew how to answer them; and now, when he heard the interpretation that was put upon his behaviour, he was ready to die with shame and mortification, though too bashful and nervous to find words to explain himself.

“Come, my young gentleman,” said Lord Algernon, insolently, for he knew who poor Mountford was, and despised him, from the depth of his heart, as the son of a man who had made his fortune by the manufacture of cotton hose.

“Come, my gentleman—none of your tricks here. As I presume you would have pocketed the money if the dice had been in your favour—it won’t do to shirk the business when the cast is against you—so fork out your notes, young son of a stocking—or else learn the noble art of I O U’s.”

“ I O U . . . but how am I to pay ? What am I to do ? ” said the lad, looking round him in despair.

“ Pay, you young . . . rascal,” he muttered between his teeth. “ How came you to bet if you did not know how to *pay* ? That may be Nottingham honour, young gentleman, but it’s not what we call honour here.”

“ Algernon — Algernon ” — said Edward, laying his hand upon his shoulder — “ be quiet — let the poor lad speak. What was it you were going to say ? ” he added, turning to Mountford, with great kindness in his look and manner.

“ I don’t know — I have nothing to say — I have not the money — and my father would flay me alive rather than pay a gaming debt.”

“ Why you precious scoundrel ! — and knowing this, you put down your name for this amount ” — showing him the list upon the leaf of a pocket-book — “ and meant to have sacked the winnings if you had gained ! ”

“ I only did what I saw all the rest of you doing.”

“ All the rest of us ! you fool, puppy — all

the rest of us ! You think that's the way gentlemen deal with each other ! ”

The poor young man grew paler and paler ; he seemed as if he could hardly stand. There he was, twenty or thirty indignant, contemptuous, mocking, scornful eyes fixed upon him—with weak and tremulous nerves, shaking in every limb—his brain whirling in utter confusion—he neither knew what to do or to say.

Edward bent down his head, whispering Algernon, who was busy at the table as ever tradesman might be at his desk—counting, and receiving, and dividing, and calculating.

“ Let the poor lad alone. Take his I O U. I will be answerable for the payment.”

“ Pooh!—nonsense, Edward ! What are you thinking of ? His father is a rich old churl, good for nothing but to be bled.”

Edward only answered coldly,—

“ I presume, if *I* give security for him, you will not refuse the lad's note-of-hand.”

“ Not *I*—do as you like. It's all one to me. Only mind, Captain Aubrey, I am a poor devil myself, and *I* cannot afford to be generous.”

“I understand you. The loss falls upon me alone.”

“Why it will be half your winnings.”

“I only wish it were all.”

Upon which Lord Algernon lifted up his face, and fixed upon him a broad stare, between contempt and amazement, and seemed ready to burst into a loud laugh—but seeing something or other that he did not quite understand in Aubrey’s face, he forebore to laugh—and saying carelessly, “Be it as you please,” went on with what he was about.

Edward passed to the opposite side of the table.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “by your permission, I will have a moment’s conversation with Mr Mountford.”

The young man upon this lifted up his scared eye—and then he could see how much friendship there was in the expression of Edward’s face; a something which subdued his foolish pride and affectation of spirit, and the tears came into his eyes, and began to trickle down his cheek again as Edward put his arm within his, and led him to the other side of the room. Some of the other young

men at this whistled in a low tone—some put their tongues into their cheeks—some turned with indifference away. There was not one—not one among them all—these young but practised gamblers, that had a thought of pity for the wretchedness of one companion, or sympathy for the generous humanity of the other.

“ Young man,” Edward gently began, when they were out of hearing of the rest—“ you must excuse the liberty I take—I mean well by you, and I hope you will at once look upon my interference as it is intended. I guess, by the few words you have let fall, that your father is not a man to be coaxed into paying debts of honour for one who has no right to incur them—but I see you are sensible of the deep disgrace of having played in the hope of gaining a large sum, upon the credit of an engagement which, if you lost, you were unable to discharge. This was bad, sir—very bad.”

“ I know it—I know it!—I did not think of it!—I assure you upon my faith and honour—I never saw it in this light before—besides, I was sure I should win.”

“ Sure you should win !” Edward could not help repeating in a slightly contemptuous tone.

“ Why did not Mr Briscoe feel sure of it—or why did he risk his money?—and everybody says he knows.”

“ Well—well—you have lost — and of course you must pay.”

“ But I can’t !—I can’t !”—cried the poor wretch in a deplorable tone. “ I have not five hundred pounds in the world.”

“ Then you are disgraced.”

“ Oh ! oh ! oh !”

“ Will you promise me faithfully if I rescue you from disgrace, that you will touch neither card nor dice for the next two years—nor make a single bet during that whole time—and that you will immediately withdraw your name from this Club.”

“ Withdraw my name from the Club !”

“ Yes, certainly. You know the alternative is to be turned out.”

“ How !—I don’t understand.”

“ Why, you...ninnny...—but attend. Can’t you see, that if you do not pay your debts of honour—of course you will be driven out from the company of *honourable* gentlemen.”

“I am sure I don’t think them so particularly honourable. Why they none of ‘em pay their tradesmen’s bills.”

“That is not the question at issue just now. Perhaps I have my own opinions upon that head as you have yours—but of this I am certain, that they are not fit company for one like you.”

“Like me, sir!”—drawing up.

Captain Aubrey took no notice of this, but went on—

“And therefore it is upon condition that you withdraw your name from the Club, and give me a written promise to the effect I mentioned—that I will endorse your note-of-hand for the sum in question—and, furthermore—‘lowering his voice,’ I will accept the said note as part of my share of these hateful gains—and if you will accompany me into the dining-room, which I think is empty, you shall see me put the document into the candle.”

A flush of joy and surprise crimsoned the pale cheek,—and the figure so beaten down and degraded by contemptible cowardice and despair, looked for the moment almost dignified by

a genuine good feeling—that of heartfelt gratitude.

Mountford seized hold of Edward's hand—

“ You will ! Then God bless you for it.”

They went to a little table, and the affair was soon settled. And then the note-of-hand endorsed by Edward was taken to the gaming-table. He simply showed it to Algernon, saying, ‘carry this to my account;’ and then, in a friendly manner, turning to Mountford, said—

“ Come along with me, I have something to tell you.” They both went down into the dining-room, where candles were burning, but where no one was present.

The note-of-hand was soon in flames within the chimney, and its atoms dispersed to the elements.

And then, without going up stairs again to receive the portion of the spoil which yet remained for him, Edward turned homewards.

It was by this time between five and six o'clock; and the sun was blazing far above the horizon over the still sleeping world of London.

CHAPTER XI.

“Friendship is constant in all other things,
Save in the office and affairs of love.”

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

... “AND so, sweet Mary, as I told you, it was a beautiful ball; a ball—like a thing in a fairy tale—or what one fancies one sees in some ballet at the opera.

“You never beheld anything more beautiful than the long line of the house, one blaze of light, as it was reflected in the water upon the lawn; and the trees glittering with what seemed numberless little glimmering stars; and the real stars over head, upon that bright night, shining down upon us. . . . Oh, so glorious! seeming to say, how far their brilliancy exceeded all that insignificant man could do.

“You remember the chorus of Haydn’s

you are so fond of, ‘The heavens are telling.’ ‘One thinks in every star an angel speaks.’ Dear Mary, were not these strange thoughts in the midst of a masked ball—but that is the use of opening windows and letting the crowd flow out of doors; there is something in the vault of heaven so far surpassing the loftiest and most noble ceiling that ever was painted.

“I was excessively happy the first part of the evening; and just in the way you would have me be happy. A way in which I felt as if it was right and good to be happy.

“There is that in Captain Aubrey that makes me feel as if I were the better for liking him as I do; and the better for feeling that he likes me. So different from some foolish, tempting, wrong and deceitful feelings I used to have, at merely being admired. There is a pleasure in being admired—*that*, I call pleasure; there is happiness in being liked—*that*, I call happiness. Do you remember you used to talk in this way long ago?—I did not quite understand you then—but I do perfectly now.

“I don’t know what Captain Aubrey and I

talked about at first—all sorts of trifling things—but then he has such a way of talking ! He always seems to me to feel so rightly about everything—but yet I thought he did not seem happy—there was a depression about him that I could not account for. He did not seem so happy as he used to be. I was so sorry to see it. His nature is in itself so joyous ! Every now and then this cloud seemed to come over him, just as we were enjoying ourselves the most. So at last I ventured to ask him whether anything was the matter?—and I found something *was* the matter.

“ Ah, Mary—matter indeed !

“ But I did not know then what it was, alas ! as I do now. I was in a fool’s paradise.

“ Mary ! Mary ! Is that the only paradise in the world. Is one never—does no one ever meet with any but a fool’s paradise here ? A paradise of mere shows and deceptions. Is there no *real* happiness to be found ?—I begin to think so.

“ But I was happy, then—oh ! so happy !

“ I could not mistake the tone of his voice,

the look of his eyes, as he said these words—
‘Oh, it rests with one, and only one, to make
mine a perpetual sunshine.’

“They must mean something, surely—all
I wished them to mean—but ah, Mary!

“Just as he was going to say something more
—and I was trembling so, I did not know
what to do—between hope and fear of what
would come next, just at that turning point,
perhaps, of my whole existence—who should
come up but that good but, on this occasion,
stupid Fisher? Breaking in upon the conversa-
tion—at that critical moment—telling me, in
a fuss, my mother wanted me to come and
to dance with Prince C—— C——. At this
Captain Aubrey first seemed as if he would
not let me go—but I felt ashamed when
Miss Fisher, in a hurry, kept saying my
mother was waiting for me, so I gave a
little pull, as if I wanted to be released; upon
which he dropped my arm instantly, and I
went away with Miss Fisher, and met my
mother bringing up Prince C. C., and
saying something about ‘where had I hidden
myself?’

“‘And who is Prince C. C.?’

“ He is a very handsome, very accomplished, very rich, very fine young Prince ; a real Prince ! Not a little German poten-tate of five hundred quarterings and fifty acres, but a real Prince from the eastern part of Europe. Of a right royal line, and the most agreeable and finished gentleman one ever saw.

“ Mary, it was impossible not to be grati-fied at the sudden look of admiration—don’t think me foolish—it is a part of my story—life is a chain of little things, I think—all working steadily, as it were, in some one direction . . . this sudden look it was that gave me courage and gave me pleasure.

“ Pleasure ! I will not deny it—I was proud at *that* moment—oh, how proud !—and I thought—this *is* something—this stamps a value upon the offering I have to make to Edward.

“ And I was charmed with the Prince for giving me this delightful feeling, and I was still more pleased, the more I saw of him. There was something so *high* about him—something quite different from any man I ever met be-fore—it made me feel as I fancy the young ladies did in the old world, when those

beautiful divinities, Apollo and so forth, came down among them.

“We waltzed together, and he danced charmingly. It was quite inspiring to dance with him. I had the feeling that we looked so well—and fool! that I was—all the time I was pleasing myself with imagining that Edward was looking on, and seeing how I looked, and seeing that this Prince of princes admired me, and that he was valuing my affection all the more, because of what I could inspire in others.

“Not that I mean—that the Prince had fallen in love with me. I had no such nonsense in my head—but I was so glad that Edward should see that such a one admired me.

“Oh! Mary, Mary, how my head and heart do ache this morning.—After the dance, we went down together to the pleasure grounds, where were tents and refreshments. I had, glancing that way some little time before, seen Edward standing by the window above the flight of steps, talking to a mask in a German ‘buy-a-broom’ dress, and I felt so pleased to pass him, and intended to give

him as I passed a little assuring look, as much as to say, ‘I don’t care for all this in the least’—but he was gone.

“I looked east—I looked west.—Captain Aubrey was no longer to be seen, and from that moment I took no more pleasure in anything. The Prince and I walked round the garden together, which was illuminated till it was as bright as day, and he kept talking for some time very agreeably, as I thought—but what cared I?

“It was of no use—my spirits were damped, and everything seemed flat and tasteless; and, as when one is in that humour one is sure to be very tasteless oneself, so it was plain the Prince found me, for he asked whether I would return to the house, as he believed he was engaged to a young lady for the next quadrille. I said my head ached, and, if he pleased, I would sit down in the fresh air a little, and begged that I might not detain him, or that I should insist upon returning to the house; upon which, after making a few polite difficulties, he did as he was bid, and oh! was I not glad to be left alone to breathe!”

“I felt so glad at last to be quiet—to think upon what had passed—upon Edward’s way—and speech, and to try and comfort myself for his not being where I expected to find him, by the security of what had passed—the certainty that he cared for me—and so I began to feel sure that he was not gone away, though I could not see him anywhere.

“But as I sat there, now looking at the stars, now searching among the gay masquerading groups in the garden, in the hopes of finding him—suddenly the ‘Buy-a-Broom’ passed behind the seat upon which I was.

“She stopped when she saw me, and seemed to hesitate a little as she stood looking at me. These masks, people seem to think, entitle them to be as rude as they please. She stared at me, as no one without a mask would have dared to have done.

“At last she said—

“‘Buy a broom, lady?’

“‘No, thank you.’

“‘Buy something else, then, lady?’

“‘Thank you—I do not want to buy anything.’

“ ‘ Not even truth—if it were to be sold ? ’ said she.

“ ‘ Truth is not sold,’ I answered. ‘ Falsehoods sometimes are.’

“ She looked very fixedly at me again for a few seconds ; then she said—

“ ‘ Very true—shall I give it you, then ? ’

“ ‘ I do not think you have any truth to give that can concern me,’ I said.

“ ‘ Oh ! but I may have, though you do not think it. An indifferent stranger may tell you truths which a partial, blinded friend would, may be, never see. Lady, those who dazzle all eyes cannot be seen as they really are, and those whom others always regard under deceptive lights, are never likely to behold themselves in a just one. You are a good young creature in the main—I can see that ; and a more beautiful one I never beheld. But you are like the rest of your foolish sex—the slave of appearances.’

“ I turned half away. I thought this impertinent, yet I could not help longing to hear more. I was sure by the voice that it was a woman and not a man that was speaking ; so I did not get up and go away.

“‘There are two,’ went on the mask. ‘One!—Where is he at this moment? Risking his honour and robbing others—little able to bear to be robbed—at the gaming table, whilst you are sitting here—*alone*. There is another . . . but I will not speak of *him*—for she is not worthy of him who cannot perceive the difference between gold and tinsel.’

“‘What do you mean?’ I said, angrily, surprised into speaking, which I ought not to have done. ‘I see no gold in the one’—I thought she was alluding to the Prince—‘and I am certain there is no tinsel in the other.’

“‘As you please—I tell you’—and she bent down her head to my ear, and whispered ‘Edward Aubrey is gone to a certain club in M. street—known to everybody but you—and when you imagine he is thinking of you, and waiting to dance with you, and what not, he has the dice-box in his hand, and is playing for enormous sums at hazard.’

“And she turned away and disappeared in the crowd.

“I did not know what to do—I should have despised the information two or three

hours ago; but now something within me urged that it tallied strangely with what had passed between us this evening—when he had seemed to confess that something was amiss in his conduct, and promise it should immediately be reformed. Was it possible?—and had he left my mother's house at such a moment, and me, and Algernon, and all of us, for a base indulgence like this?—and more, was he at that very instant upon the brink of a precipice—playing for enormous sums—‘risking his honour,’ she said—Oh! miserable infatuation!

“ I felt so sick and ill, I could hardly keep myself from falling upon the ground. I got up and tried to return to the house; I could not—I was obliged to sit down again.

“ And then came to my assistance that one who had saved my life a short time ago.

“ Suddenly, as if he had been somewhere close by all the time, and had seen me change colour and feel so ill—the very man most desirable for me at that moment to see—William Aubrey, Edward's brother, stood before me, saying, ‘ You seem ill. Has that mask said anything to annoy you?’—He

spoke so kindly and gently, and with such a protecting tone! as if he could and would ward all evil from me—save me from sorrow as he had already saved me from death!

“It is quite strange how his tone of voice and the look which accompanied it seemed to say all this; and how I at once felt as if I could lean upon him and trust him as the wisest and tenderest of brothers.

“But he *is* Edward’s brother.

“I looked up at him, and my eyes filled with tears in spite of myself.

“‘What *can* be the matter?’ he said anxiously.

“‘Oh! Mr Aubrey!—it is dreadful what that mask said to me.’

“‘What could she say?—Dreadful!—What dared she to say?’

“‘Oh! Mr Aubrey!—Edward—Captain Aubrey—your brother.’

“He went a little paler—he is usually pale—and his lips looked white, but

“‘What of him?’ was all he uttered.

“‘That mask says’

“‘But who believes what masks say?’ he interrupted.

“ ‘ Nobody?—May one pay no attention to what masks say?’

“ ‘ Very little, I should think.’

“ ‘ But this was so terrible—so terrible!’

“ ‘ Sweet Lady Emma,’ sitting down by me, and just laying his hand upon mine, which was trembling upon the bench, and doing this so kindly, so like a brother—as I am sure he feels, and is to me—‘ Had you not better tell me at once what is so terrible? In all probability I may be able to assure you whether you ought to believe it or not.’

“ ‘ She says—she says—that Edward—Captain Aubrey—I mean your brother—Oh! Mr William!—Mr Aubrey!—he is at this very moment at some club—I forget the name, and don’t know it—but he has gone away from my mother’s party, and is at this very moment playing hazard, and for enormous sums, she says.’

“ ‘ I don’t believe a word of it.’

“ I could not help turning suddenly round and I don’t know what I said for very joy.

“ The colour flew up into his face.

“ I loved him all the better for being so indignant in his brother’s cause.

“‘ Oh ! bless you ! bless you ! for saying that. But are you sure—can you be quite, quite, quite, sure ?’

“ And I fairly burst into tears.

“ I could not help it. I know I ought—but I could *not* help it. I was so glad—it was such a relief.

“ I fairly sobbed aloud.

“‘ Are you quite, quite sure ? Tell me again—tell me you are quite, quite sure.’

“ He seemed as if he could not very easily speak himself at that moment, but he pressed the hand that lay under his.

“ He seemed struggling with himself, struggling to keep down his feelings—he tried to speak once, twice, three times.

“ William Aubrey has the softest, most feeling nature in the world.

“‘ Quite sure ?’ I sobbed out again.

“‘ Quite sure,’ he said at last, in an odd, hollow sort of voice—he must have been perfectly overcome with feeling—“ As sure as one man can be of another, whose conduct he never in his life had occasion to condemn.’

“ I looked suddenly up at him—oh ! so

gratefully, as he said this; but I was shocked when I saw his face—he seemed like one struggling for life—as if some terrible hand was clutching at his breast and choking him. His face had quite changed.

“‘What is the matter, Mr Aubrey?’

“I thought he was suddenly taken very ill.

“‘Matter!’ said he, in a melancholy tone, his countenance suddenly collapsing; ‘What matters it?’

“And then his eyes fell upon me with so piteous an expression—that I could not help fearing all was not right.

“‘But why do you look as you do? if Edward be what you say . . .?’

“‘*Then* nothing in creation can go wrong,’ he said, with a faint smile.

“‘I don’t mean that—I know you may have troubles of your own—but just now . . .?’

“‘I *have* troubles of my own—and why not just now?’

“‘The joy to find Edward guiltless?’

“‘I always believed him not only to be without guilt, but almost without blemish,’ was his answer.

“ And like one who has gained some great victory, as he said this, his face suddenly lighted up all in a glorious glow.

“ What a heart he has!—What sympathy in his brother’s welfare!—but they are all so proud of him, and well they may.

“ I did not say thank you—thank you—though my heart said it, and I dare say my eyes said it. Now I was less uncomfortable—I began to feel a little ashamed of what I had been saying to Edward’s brother—my heart was lightened of its burden, and I endeavoured to behave myself, and recollect what I was about.

“ So I sat still a little time, and then I withdrew my hand which he still was holding in his, and said, I felt rather cold, and perhaps we had better go into the house again.

“ He looked wistfully at me, as if he had something more that he wanted to say—then gave a heavy sigh.—Such a sigh, Mary, it seemed to come from the very bottom of the heart; and rising, asked me ‘ whether I would take his arm?’

“ I was so shaken, and so tired, and so com-

pletely *down*, with one thing or another, that I was glad enough to take it—but how his was trembling !

“ This is all very odd and disagreeable; don’t you think so, Mary?—I do not know what to make of it.

“ In the first place there is no doubt that Captain Aubrey was gone. Unless, indeed, he returned masked. But that I think he hardly would have done and not have spoken to me. And it is certain that no other mask addressed me during the remainder of the evening.

“ Then this extreme emotion and depression upon the part of William Aubrey, coupled with that cloud which certainly did at times come over his brother’s face—and his owning, almost, that he had done something which he did not approve of, and his sort of promise to me that it should be amended !

“ One feels so inexperienced, so ignorant of things. Going stumbling along in this great dreary world around us—not knowing whither we turn—or what we see. . . . All in a sort of twilight obscurity.—Oh, for a friend!—I do so want a friend—a brother!—Dear

Algernon!—I do love you dearly—dearly—but what I want is a wise friend.

“ My mother, as you well know, is far too busy for friendship. She has not time, even if she had inclination, to listen to a girl’s idle talk and difficulties. But I need not call this idle talk or girlish difficulty—it is a very very serious thing. The whole happiness of my existence—I know it, and feel it—is involved in the question of Edward’s integrity.

“ Oh! how I wish William Aubrey were anything in the world but Edward’s brother. I would rather ask his advice than that of any one I know. But one cannot—it is not maidenly to show so much interest to a man’s own brother—it is like showing it to himself.

“ Surely, he would tell me the truth. If he is not truthful, who is? I never saw a more truthful countenance—I can fancy dear Edward telling a white lie now and then, for fun, or gallantry; but William never.

“ His face is the very mirror of plainness and truth—so gentle, yet so sincere.

“ But then, to betray his brother’s secret

infirmities to me!—what brother?—what man of honour and feeling could bear to do it? And probably—nay, I am sure of it—he thinks his brother is about to amend his faults.

“Did not Edward promise me?

“But where was he yesterday evening?

“Who shall tell me—how shall I learn?

“I must learn—I must and will know.

“Mary! Mary! I have it.

“I will ask himself!”

CHAPTER XII.

Your brother—no, no brother, yet the son—
Yet not the son—I will not call him son—
Of him I was about to call his father.—

AS YOU LIKE IT.

WILLIAM AUBREY returned home in a state of agitation and distress that was piteous.

His heart overflowing with jealousy, with envy, with a sort of wild despair. There could be no doubt of it,—the sweet creature loved his brother. The heart he had all along allowed himself to consider as his own lawful possession, and which, as has been said, with a strange self-flattery he had believed he was far better calculated to obtain, and more deserving of than Edward could be--was already given away.

Every sentence that fell from her lips —the expression of her eyes, the tones of

her voice—all her innocent undisguise of manner—at once made him sensible of the value of the heart he so much prized, and that it was lost to him for ever.

How should he bear it?

And then his thoughts turned to reflect upon what she had told him, and passed to a severe scrutiny upon the integrity of his own answers, an integrity which had cost such an effort that he shuddered at the temptation he had gone through, for well he knew that one word of his in confirmation of what she dreaded might have sufficed to open her eyes and sever that tie,—the existence of which was worse than death to him.

Then the tempter within began to argue and question with—almost to blame, him. Why must he take upon himself to advocate his brother's cause? Why not have seized the opportunity to plead his own—To point out the difference between the two, and to persuade her of that which he himself sincerely believed—that of the two Captain Aubrey was not the man best formed to make her happy?

Of this fact he felt more than ever persuaded by what had passed that night—when she had shown so much sensibility and right feeling.

And why, then, must he, from an exaggerated sense of honour, do what in him lay to confirm her partiality for his brother? Was Edward indeed as deserving as the world gave him credit for being, or was he nothing more than a brave, brilliant, and fashionable young man, without either conduct or solidity—incapable through his intellectual habits of that life of the soul for which he himself alone desired to exist—and which this lovely creature appeared so well formed to share?

And so he allowed himself to play the casuist with his conscience. And thus that first step towards wrong-doing was taken,—wherein a man suffers himself after an action of this nature rather to regret the sacrifice than rejoice at the victory.

The man who does this is preparing to yield upon the next occasion.

And so William walked musingly home—a thorough egotist—though by no means a selfish man. And many such there are who, be-

cause they are neither of unjust, nor ungenerous habits, live on regardless of this absorption into self—this reference of all things to self, which gradually impairs every finer moral quality.

So entirely, indeed, were his thoughts engaged in this manner that he had quite overlooked what Lady Emma had told him of his brother, until entering the dining-room, upon his return home, he found his father seated there.

He was about to retire, for he was in no humour for conversation; but his father, turning round, said,

“Is it you, William? Come in—I am alone.”

William obeyed.

“Where is Edward?” asked Mr Aubrey, as his son approached the table, and stood there, hat in hand, without sitting down. “Where is your brother? I thought you had been together at the Marchioness of Hurstmonceaux’s masquerade. Did you not see him there?”

“Yes,” said William, “he was there,—not masked, but in dress uniform.”

“I am glad of that—I could not have endured that he should have made a tom-fool of himself. But why is he not come home with you?”

“Nay, sir—I have again to repeat—I am not my brother’s keeper. Edward has his own hours, and pursues his own plans—and what am I, that I should interfere with them?”

“Did you leave him, then, at the ball?”

“He was not to be seen there when I came away, but that is nothing—he might have masked and assumed a character at the end of the evening—many, I know, did so.”

“Then you were not aware of his presence—You do not know, in fact, whether you left him at the ball or not? Is that what you intend to say?”

“Precisely.”

“I have not been very well this last two days,” Mr Aubrey went on, after a short silence, “or I should have gone to this ball myself. I want to see the young lady who, you assure me, forms the excuse for Edward’s late hours—and for his indifference to my

wishes in that respect. But I am not well—I don't know how it is exactly with me."

"What is the matter, sir?" going up to him immediately.

Mr Aubrey laid his hand upon his son's arm.

"A worn-out life—"

"But you are young, sir, quite young—You should not suffer yourself to fancy such things—Men have been commanding armies and ruling nations, at an age far exceeding yours."

"Possibly so.—But my life has been a wearying one—busy and prosperous, yet yielding little satisfaction. I have amassed money. I have risen to the summit of my ambition, as regards this world. I have succeeded in everything that I have undertaken . . . to find, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit.—A hollow deception all. What I have most desired has proved most tasteless when attained. Apples of Sodom!—Apples of Sodom!—There is no one good thing under the sun!"

"I am sorry," William replied gravely, "when I hear any man, and most of all you,

sir, confess to the discovery of that, which I have found out almost since I could think at all."

" You ! "

" And why not I ? " said William, with some impatience, " Is my lot in life so particularly fortunate, that I should escape the longings and the regrets which are the portion of most men ? "

" Those are more sick who surfeit on too much, than those who starve upon too little," was his father's answer. " William—why are you always harping upon that string ?—Do you envy your brother ? "

" Yes," said William firmly, " I do."

" Base passion," muttered his father, " Then I was not deceived in my opinion.—I always thought you of a totally different nature—scarcely could believe you of the same blood. As your brother—You ! you have sucked in baseness with your mother's—"

" No, not mother's," interrupted William, in a sullen voice.

" Well, then, your nurse's milk—you are not like a son of mine—you are the very reverse in all things to Edward."

“Yes, sir—no one feels and knows that more sensibly than I do, but it remains to be proved whether I alone am capable of the miserable passion of envy. Strip him as I stand here stripped—of everything that can render life desirable—and endow me with all man covets upon earth, and we shall see how he will stand the test.”

“I would back him against ten thousand.”

William said no more.

There was silence for a few moments, then Mr Aubrey began again.

“Why *can* he not come home?”

William answered nothing.

“Was the ball over when you came away? Did you see nothing whatever of him?”

“Nothing.”

“Nor happen to hear anything?”

“How should I hear anything of him?” said William, evasively.

“You did hear something of him then,” cried Mr Aubrey, starting from his reclining posture in the arm-chair, and sitting upright, and I desire that you will hide nothing, but tell me frankly what it was you heard.”

“Nay, sir—is not that requiring too much

of me? Am I good for nothing better than to be a fetch and carrying tale bearer?" William replied, with a good deal of emotion.

"Tale bearer! This is not the first time you have offended me by these sort of insinuations. Be it as you will . . . You refuse to assist your father, whose only object in life is, as you well know, the welfare and security of your brother. Be it as you please. I ask no more questions."

"I beg your pardon, sir—I was far from intending to offend you; but will you not see—can you help seeing—that nothing upon earth could lead to such ill constructions upon myself as the carrying defaming reports—which I am convinced are false—to you, the father of my brother."

"I will be the judge of that—I will stand you security as to that. You *have* heard something, then—tell me, William, what is it?"

As he was speaking, the door bell was heard to ring.

"Here he comes—ask himself," said William.

“ It is his footstep in the hall; he is going up stairs. Bid him come in to me.”

William opened the dining-room door slowly, and unwillingly; at that moment he could scarcely bear to look upon his brother’s countenance.

“ Edward ! ”

Captain Aubrey turned—Such a troubled face was displayed.

“ My father wants to speak with you.”

“ My father ! —I thought he had been in bed hours ago.”

“ No—he is up, and not quite well.”

“ Not well ! ”—hastily turning, and entering the room—“ not well ! Sir—my dear father—what is the matter ? Indeed, you do not look well.”

“ Edward,” said Mr Aubrey, and he held out his hand to his son, “ if you are well, I am well, and all is as it should be. You are come home straight from this ball—I thank you for this condescension to an old man’s wishes.”

“ Sir,” cried Edward, and a fine colour flew into his face, “ I am not.”

But Mr Aubrey turned so pale, that the

words he was about to speak—the confession he was about to make—were arrested. He stopped suddenly, looking confused and annoyed.

“ You mean to say, then,” said Mr Aubrey, looking steadily at him, while his face grew darker and paler every moment, “ that what I so earnestly desire has not been done—that this night is as other nights. Well, well—it is what fathers must look for from their sons—I was but a fool to expect different treatment from mine.”

“ Don’t speak in that way, my dear father. You know it is my pleasure, as it is my highest duty, to consult your wishes; but forgive me—it is impossible to be always what others desire one to be—what one desires oneself to be”

“ You have been playing again, then, I am to understand. . . . And what have you lost, young man? Come—be candid. What am I to advance for you?

“ Playing—who told you I ever played?” cried Edward, angrily, glancing at his brother. “ William consent to be a spy !”

“ You need not cast such looks at your

brother, Edward. I have not my information from him. He regards neither my interest nor yours in preserving this obstinate silence with respect to the manner in which you spend your time. But at least he deserves no other reproach at your hands."

"I beg your pardon, William—I sincerely beg your pardon," cried Edward, turning suddenly to his brother, and taking his hand and pressing it warmly. "Forgive me—I have behaved shamefully. Forgive me, William—brother."

A pang shot through William's heart as he looked upon Edward's manly, affectionate countenance, whilst saying this. He envied him—in those bitter moments he envied him even his good qualities, wretched man that he was !

Mr Aubrey looked on without betraying any emotion in his countenance, yet his heart swelled, and yearned towards his eldest son.

Reserved, cold, saturnine, as was his own temper, the genial warmth of Edward's manner sent a glow of delight, as it were, through his whole frame.

But his anxiety as to the main subject

upon which his suspicions had been awakened was only increased by the admission Edward had made. It was plain that he considered himself in his brother's power, and was most grateful for William's silence.

“Edward!—turn this way. Let me look in your face, sir, and do you the same by me. It is well—or rather it is very far from well. Something is wrong here,” and he laid his hand upon his son's breast.

“Wrong—wrong—aye a thousand things wrong,” was Edward's reply. “Could you suppose, sir, kind and partial as you are, that I could be an angel, exempt from human faults and infirmities? But do not ask me further—what I could tell you it might give you great pain to know. Be satisfied, dear sir, I have no gaming debts, upon my honour I have not one.”

“Then it is because fortune has been favourable. Oh! my son! how can you bear the reflection! Other men's money! Money they can ill spare, perhaps, in your purse. Do you think it was the expectation of having your debts to pay that made me uneasy. Go and spend your money honourably, young

man, as you used to do, and see if your father will ever grudge to supply it."

"Sir!" father! cried Edward, greatly moved, "you have said enough. I have played, I own it, but I have done for ever. Ask me no questions about the past, the answers would only give you pain. Be satisfied, dear father. I am sick and disgusted with the past. I *have* played. I will play no more."

Mr Aubrey held out his hand, Edward took it with reverend affection. Then perceiving how pale his father looked, he begged of him so affectionately to go to bed; assured him so seriously that this should be the last time that he should have reason to complain of him, that his father went up to his chamber more delighted with him than ever. There was something in the warm cordiality of Edward's nature that exercised a species of fascination over every one with whom he came into close connection.

All save one, and his connection with him, near as was the relationship, could not, perhaps, be called close.

CHAPTER XIII.

Beshrew me but I love her heartily ;
For she is wise, if I can judge of her ;
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true ;
And true she is, as she hath proved herself.

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

So things went on for some little time.

Edward abstained from even visiting the Club, and was less with Lord Algernon in consequence. That young nobleman, indeed, seemed indifferent to his, or to any company or occupation save one—his time and his thoughts were swallowed up in gaming, to which an extraordinary run of luck tempted him more than ever.

Ascot races occurred at the end of this period, and to them, with all the rest of the world, the party with whom we have to do went.

The Marquis of Hurstmonceaux had taken a house on the skirts of Cranbourne Chase, and was there with the Marchioness, Lady

Emma, and a large party of friends, among whom the Prince of C. C. made one.

Edward Aubrey was upon the course, and so was William; the latter drawn there by an attraction which he felt to be fatal to his peace, and contrary to every habit of his former self—the other agonising with jealousy, watching the figure of the girl he so tenderly loved—seated in the Grand Stand, surrounded by admirers.

She was beautifully dressed in abundance of white muslin and lace, with a bonnet trimmed with delicate pink flowers, and a rich Brussels lace veil hanging from it, and falling softly all round her face; and her blue eyes smiled sweetly, and her lovely lips were prattling so pleasantly, as she turned from one to the other, apparently in the highest spirits.

He sat there, idly leaning upon the fine chesnut horse which carried him, his eyes turned upon that group above, indifferent to all besides—the clamorous throng, the bawling voices, the hum of business from the betting-stand, the hurry and excitement as the beautiful animals which were to contend

for the prize appeared, mounted by the light jockeys in their black caps, bright silken vests, glanced gaily under a brilliant sun, and ambled gently up and down the course, displaying their forms and their paces to the anxious eyes of those who had thousands and thousands depending upon the issue—and to the admiration of those who were only there to see and be seen. It was all nothing to Edward.

He sees but one.

She is gay and animated. He watches that thrill of girlish surprise and pleasure, at the bright scene at which she is present for the first time of her life—her delight at the beauty of the glorious day—exhilarated as she is by its warmth, and the sweet freshness of a high breeze that blows over those heathy downs—he sees her, stretching forward to gaze—as fresh object succeeds to object, and then turning round and appearing to prattle so gayly and prettily with those about her, and looking so happy !

And there he sits without spirits to enter the Stand, and mingle with the group around her; oppressed with many a painful reflection,

but most of all by that one bitter thought—that she could be so joyous and happy and he away. It was plain she cared little for him—perhaps not at all.

And—ah!—ah!

Here he comes—and the colour flies into her beautiful face, and her eyes flash brighter than ever.

At least he thought so—and rage in his heart, would fain have turned away—but he was as one fascinated to the spot—he could not move.

But was it as he imagined?

So it might appear, indeed; but little did he know what was passing in that young heart.

She had seen him sitting there.

One glance had assured her that he was present and watching her—that she was the sole object of his attention in the midst of the bustling crowd—and that assurance it was which had sent the blood to her cheek and given fresh sweetness and brilliancy to her eyes—and too delighted was she to show that others were attentive when he was negligent and unkind—for why did he not come into the Stand when she was there? She was vexed and wished

to give him a little pain—and so, when the Prince of C. C. joined the party, whose attentions, as I said before, were the acknowledged standard of success—the grand triumph of the season—she stealing a little naughty glance down, and seeing him still sitting there watching and looking, as she thought, charming, seated in that negligent manner upon his beautiful horse, for once indulged the true spirit of coquetry,—and the bright cheek and the flashing eye answered to the exulting heart.

She welcomed the Prince with smiles so sweet that he, old experienced stager as he was, thought that he had never seen a creature so bewitching, and he began, at that moment, really to feel an odd, almost forgotten, sensation, as if there was something called a heart yet beating within him, and as if it was being literally a *little* touched. He was surprised at himself—but the sensation was rather agreeable. It reminded him of early days—days gone long ago, when he was a calf of a boy, and fancied himself in love.

So his countenance responded, far more

than responded to hers, and, like a flattering glass, gave extreme beauty to his expression, and there was a touch of almost natural tenderness about it, so that Lady Emma herself began to be a little moved, more than she had ever thought it possible she could be moved by any face but that one—which was so dear to her.

What Edward saw with such bitter feelings of despair was but a momentary forgetfulness. Lady Emma began with the innocent desire of enhancing her value in the eyes of the man she loved, and ended, by suffering herself to be, for a short moment, fascinated by the dangerous one whom, in her heart, she cared not for.

Oh, world ! world ! with what snares dost thou encompass the heedless and the young !

Emma ceased to look down towards him, as he sat there below, and turned away to the prince, and they too were soon seated together, engaged in a conversation which appeared but too interesting to the wretched observer. She bending her head and listening, her colour rising and falling upon her cheek, and he, his proud head bent downwards, seeming to think of nothing but her.

And it was very pleasant for this *blasé*, blighted man of the world to fancy himself thinking of nothing but her.

She was a sweet creature certainly, there was something so *naïve*, so spirited—united to such perfect ton and good manners!—thus thought he.

He should trifle away the remainder of his stay in England very pleasantly in her company, and how could he amuse himself better?

How little did she guess what was passing in his mind, or understand those eyes, so well taught to tell a tale of false and most delusive tenderness. How little did she know the nature of that delusion which was leading her fancy, for the moment, astray.

She was so young, and had been so little instructed in what was right, that she was not aware how pernicious a thing it was for her own heart, thus to be trifling with its affections—far, far less could she dream of the fatal consequences of that hour.

They were, one and all of them, in truth, in the same case, wandering bewildered in the labyrinth of this world—in the entanglement of their own wishes, feelings, and inclinations

—none of them looking either to the right hand or to the left—none of them choosing or directing their course—all blindly following the path to which the fancy of the moment led them.

The prince yielded to the yain pleasure of trifling with his own and her feelings, and she suffered vanity and imagination to bewitch her for the time.

But Edward—what did he do?

Much as he did on a former occasion.

His first impulse was to dismount from his horse, throw his bridle to his groom—come into the Grand Stand and confound her by one look—one look would be enough.

But as his foot was upon the stairs, a set of young men, laughing and talking, came hurrying down ; the start was about to be made, and they were hastening to the betting-stand, to look after their bets. Edward wanted strength of purpose enough to enable him to stem this torrent—he suffered it to sweep him before it—and it swept him into the betting-stand.

There stood Algernon, flushed with recent victories, both upon the turf and at the table

—intoxicated with the deceitful wealth thus showered upon him by fortune—confiding in his own good star, he was betting with a reckless defiance of everything.

As soon as he saw Edward, he crossed the Stand, and, seizing him by the arm, cried,

“ And where have you been hiding yourself for these last ten days, my good fellow? Just in time! Ten to one—the favourite against the field. Take the bet,—I have taken it in thousands. There is not a doubt about the matter—I know her, and all about her. She will carry all before her—See! see!”—and he turned him round as he spoke—“ there she comes—What shape!—What a spring!—What bone; yet what lightness! Here, Stanhope, Aubrey ’ll take your bet, if you ’ll have any more.”

“ Yes,” replied a dark, ill-looking man of about fifty, with thick set figure, and hair combed straight down over his forehead, “ I am ready to take Captain Aubrey—but he must speak quick, for I am not so sure of my field but what I must be allowed time for hedging.”

“ Come, Aubrey”—

“As you will,” said Edward, careless of everything—of his father—of his implied promise—“ten to one—against the field ; which way is it ?—I never know—in five hundreds—just as you choose.”

For from where he stood his eye commanded the Grand Stand displayed there before him like a bed of flowers—and among those beautiful creatures he saw one leaning forward, with girlish eagerness, over the balustrade—and asking questions, with breathless impatience, from him who leaned over too—but seemed to see nothing but herself.

“As you will,” he said.

“Will you not write it down in your betting-book ?”

“I have not one. Write it you down, Algernon—what is it ?”

“Sir—Captain Aubrey—”

He turned, for some one touched his elbow.

There was so great a crowd that it was almost impossible to move—but an arm was stretched towards him.

“Captain Aubrey—”

And, pale with emotion—his eyes straining to catch his—his arm anxiously pressed for-

wards to seize his arm, Aubrey beheld Mountford struggling to make his way through the closely packed figures that stood around him.

The poor boy's face was working with anxiety and impatience—the cold dew stood upon his forehead—but he could not reach Edward.

“Captain Aubrey!”—

That was all he seemed able to utter.

“I beg your pardon, gentlemen—will you make way for a friend of mine, who seems to have something to say to me?”

“Oh,” said Mr Stanhope, having entered his bet into his book with great deliberation, “I beg your pardon”—then turning round as he made way—

“Mr Mountford,”—he muttered with a faint sneer—as the pale, lank boy pushed forward—and the press giving way, he laid hold of Edward's arm.

“Captain Aubrey,” he whispered, “come to the window, will you, out of hearing of these men—I have something to say to you.”

Edward yielded, with his usual good nature, to the anxious impatience of the boy, and suffered himself to be led to the other side of the place.

“It’s a great liberty—but I owe you so much. They would half murder me if they knew—that Stanhope . . . You havn’t—I hope you havn’t been betting upon the favourite.”

“I don’t very well know what I have been doing—I have done as Algernon bade me . . . he knows—I know nothing of these things—Why?—what’s the matter? . . .”

“I hope you’ll forgive me, Captain Aubrey, I hope it’s no very large sum.”

“I’m sure I don’t know; let me calculate; if I lose—on my life but there goes five thousand,” cried he, aghast—“What have I been about, moon-calfing in this way—and my father!—well, I suppose I shall win—the favourite’s sure of the day.”

“But she isn’t, she isn’t—you won’t win it, you won’t indeed. Oh, if there were only time for you to hedge.”

“But there is not—they are starting—they are gone!”

“There is yet time to hedge, Captain Aubrey—and—Oh! I beseech you, listen to me—” as Edward said somewhat impatiently,

“Lord Algernon assures me that the favourite must win.”

“Oh, hedge! hedge!” cried the boy in an agony—“the favourite will *not* win—I know it will not win—it cannot win—they have taken good care it shall not win. Oh, Captain Aubrey, there is still time, hedge—hedge.”

“I hope,” said Edward, gravely eyeing the youngster as he spoke, “that you, possessing some information that others do not, or, at least, imagining you do, which amounts to the same thing, have not been taking the field against the favourite.”

Mountford’s eye fell at this speech, and the colour flew to his face, but it was merely a nervous sense of shame, at having been thought capable of such a meanness.

His face resumed its natural hue, and his eye was, for once, steady and true, as he answered.

“No, upon my honour, I have not.”

“That’s right,” said Edward, and hastened away as if there was nothing else that he cared for.

Mountford was dull enough in his percep-

tions, but he understood this, and it made him feel more grateful than ever.

“He cares more for my honourable conduct than for five thousand pounds!” was his mental exclamation—then, following him,—“but, Captain Aubrey—”

“Well, well, well.” Edward’s eyes were again fixed upon the Grand Stand.

“By Jove, they are coming up!—The favourite is leading—hedge—hedge, dear Captain Aubrey! Any odds against the field will be taken now—Captain Aubrey!—Captain Aubrey!—the favourite will come in second—I know it—I know it!”

“If,” said Edward, coolly turning round, “you mean that you have private information of your own, of which others are ignorant,”

“I have, I have!”—breathless with impatience—“Oh, for heaven’s sake—”

“Then what I would not have you do, *I* will not do—”

“But the case is so different—what will you not do?”

“Profit by it.”

“But *you*—you have been taken in by a rascal, with whom no scores are to be kept.

—Oh ! oh !— Too late ! too late !—It is as I said—the favourite—the favourite.”

And the race rushed by—

The favourite lost it by half a neck.

Edward felt a cold chill over his whole frame—he turned pale.—Mountford saw his changed countenance, and turned paler still.

“ You care to lose this money,” he said in a low voice, bringing his mouth close to Edward’s ear.

“ I cannot help caring for it,” said Edward, endeavouring to look composed—“ It is a large sum—and my father, who is not well, will be vexed at it—Not that he would care for the money, if spent in an honourable way—but thus !—and after what I said not ten days ago !—fool !—madman !—fool !”

This he muttered to himself, and turned to the window, and leaned out to hide his agitation.

Mountford stood silently by for a short time—his face working in a strange manner —now red—now deadly pale.

“ You excused me a much larger sum than that,” he said at last, leaning out of the window by Edward’s side, and speaking in a

low, faltering voice—"I owe you that and a great deal more ; why cannot I brave *my* father's anger, rather than you should brave yours. I ought to say, Captain Aubrey, I will pay you the five thousand I owe you. I ought to go to *my* father—and not you to yours—I know that I ought—but—but—"

" You cannot—I thank you for thinking of it—but never mind, I know you fear your father—that is a terrible feeling, poor fellow. It must be dreadful to see a father really angry—to be cast off" he went on talking indistinctly to himself, " as this poor fellow's father would cast him off if he knew the scrape he has got himself into. That would indeed be insupportable—the shame and the sorrow !—My father !—he will suffer—but he will forgive—He is severe, but he is generous—he will blame, but he will forgive—but as for this poor timid lad ! . . . No, it must not be thought of."

He had been tempted to accept the poor boy's offer at first, he so dreaded the giving pain to his father,—but these last considerations prevailed. The next thought was—

Algernon has had a run of luck, he owes me money, I will ask *him*. My father must not know of this folly. It would half kill him.

He drew himself in from the window, and turned round to look for Algernon, but Algernon was no longer to be seen. In his place came up Mr Stanhope—who was in truth a regular professional—he held his betting-book in his hand. There was a sort of bustle on the Stand, and Edward perceived that a good deal of murmuring and discussion was going on. Mr Stanhope, however, approached in the blandest manner, saying,

“Captain Aubrey—if it will be perfectly convenient to you . . . as I have not the honour of your personal acquaintance, perhaps—”

“Five thousand, is it not?—I have not the money about me.”

“Not of the slightest importance—an I.O.U. or any memorandum of that sort from a gentleman of Captain Aubrey’s known honour will be sufficient. I regret to say—that as I am obliged to leave England for Paris to-morrow morning early, I shall wish to get the bill discounted to-night—or by ten o’clock to-morrow, when the West End banks open,

will do, should that suit Captain Aubrey's convenience better."

"Of course," said Edward, somewhat angrily, "You don't suppose I can chuck away five thousand pounds as boys chuck cherry-stones. I must provide to take up the memorandum, as you call it, when it comes to my banker for payment."

"No doubt, no doubt, but Captain Aubrey's agent——"

"Is not in the habit of being asked for large advances, sir. Will you please to give me a leaf of your pocket-book, that I may write what you require?"

Which he did, and was about to hand it to Mr Stanhope, when he was again interrupted by Mountford, who said, "Stay, Captain Aubrey, there is a discussion going on—there was not fair play."

"Sir," said Mr Stanhope, opening wide his eyes, "what do you presume to insinuate?"

Poor Mountford looked somewhat startled at this question, which was put with all the arrogant defiance of a bravo—the stern, black, daring eye of the gambler, seeming, as it were, to pierce through the vitals of the nervous,

irresolute young man before him: who turned very pale, and visibly trembled.

This added fresh strength to Mr Stanhope's resolution to carry the question by main force.

"Mr Mountford," he said, eyeing him, "in another place, and at another time, I will ask for an explanation of this ungentlemanlike and uncalled-for interference. With respect to there having been, or having not been, what you are pleased to call, fair play, I do profess myself to be ignorant, having no acquaintance among those blackguards with whom Mr Mountford seems to be upon such confidential terms, gentry ready with any scandalous pretence to evade the payment of their debts of honour—sir, the bet between Captain Aubrey and myself, is an affair between gentlemen, with whom *you* can have little to do."

The insolence called a hectic colour to the lad's cheeks, but he seemed ready to sink into the earth with shame, at the turn affairs were taking.

It was but too true, he was upon very intimate terms of acquaintanceship with many of the jockeys, and those not the most

respectable of the body, as also with various grooms, hangers-on about the stables, and that sort of people, which, in his perverted ambition to be thought a regular man of the world, he had considered as just the thing—and therefore, that conscience, which makes cowards of us all, responded to the accusations thus heaped upon him. It was certain, that from a hanger-on of this description, he had obtained the secret, that the favourite had certainly been physicked before she started, and he had recompensed the man for his intelligence by a five-pound note. He now felt heartily ashamed of what he had done, and there he stood, blushing and stammering, and casting a wistful eye at Captain Aubrey.

Edward was touched by the appeal, and he said quietly, but with decision—

“How Mr Mountford obtained the intelligence, which, unfortunately come too late for any one to profit by it, I should suppose is at least no affair of Mr Stanhopes—”

“Pardon me, sir,” was the reply, with a look of withering contempt at the miserable caitiff, who stood there looking like the most abject criminal,” so long as Mr Mountford pleases

to keep his romantic inventions to himself, so long he is at liberty to enjoy them—and, he may make use of them to evade as many bets as he pleases, for anything I care. *I* never accept such things from children, who go mewling and crying when they are called upon to pay—but when babies presume to interfere in the affairs of men and gentlemen, I shall take the liberty of showing them, that I, for one, have my own peculiar remedy for these sort of proceedings.”

And he made a very significant gesture.

“ You may spare yourself the trouble, Mr Stanhope, of correcting that gentleman, his education, I presume, has not been entrusted to your hands. As regards the little account between ourselves, I beg to say, that I am ready to give you my note of hand for it. I consider that I incurred the debt, and I shall pay it.”

And with apparent coolness he placed the paper he held in Mr Stanhope’s hand.

But, having done so, he looked round for Lord Algernon, for his heart was sinking at the thought of his father, so unfit, at this

moment, to bear any hurry or anxiety—but Lord Algernon was not to be seen.

Edward was leaving the Stand in order to search for him, when Mountford again came up, saying, timidly—

“Captain Aubrey, I am ashamed of myself—I do not know what to say in my defence—I thank you exceedingly for supporting me at that critical moment, when Stanhope might have made me the laughing stock of the whole Stand—but you ought not to have paid the money *indeed*.” There was so much simple, passionate earnestness in this misguided boy, whenever he was not affecting to ape the manners of men of the world, as he thought, that Edward was quite affected.

“I paid the money,” he said, “because I believed that I ought so to do. It was very kind of you, Mountford, to warn me, and if I believed that the horse was really physicked, I should hesitate, I confess, as to what I ought to do—but I have just overheard what Mr Cottenham has been assuring Lord Baynforth is the truth—that the dose was an innocent one, and administered by the connivance of the groom and jockey—in order to be set up

as a pretext for not paying the bets, incurred in case the favourite lost. This being so, there was no doubt as to the obligation—and now,” added he, taking Mountford’s arm, as they descended the steps of the Stand together, “may I say one word more—Will Mr Mountford again lay himself under the possibility of receiving a lesson from Mr Stanhope?—Will he be, not only an intimate acquaintance, but suffer himself to be made the tool of the low and designing people who engage in these scandalous intrigues.”

Again Mountford coloured, and he made as if he would withdraw the arm which Edward held.

He was still so foolish as to feel inclined to resent, instead of gratefully accepting the other’s disinterested advice.

He was still jealous of being treated like a boy.

But Edward was most indulgent of nature, and nothing could weary or offend him when he hoped to do good. He had been too much in the habit of forbearance as regarded those under his command on ship-board, to be lightly offended or easily turned from a benevolent purpose.

“Excuse me, Mountford,” he said, “but I seem to feel as if I had known you for years,—and, besides, you have laid me, to-day, under a very serious obligation, by your kind endeavours to save me from heavy loss. Remember, too, that I am a mere seaman, and, as such, accustomed to feel strongly and speak plainly. You must permit me to say one more word.—Fly low company, as you would the poison of vipers—assert your better self—weigh the objects of your present ambition at their just value.—What is the applause of a set of men like those you frequent?—Valueless as an object, and, if obtained, to be obtained at the cost of all that is really worthy and honourable within you.”

“But what can I do?—I have nothing better to do.”

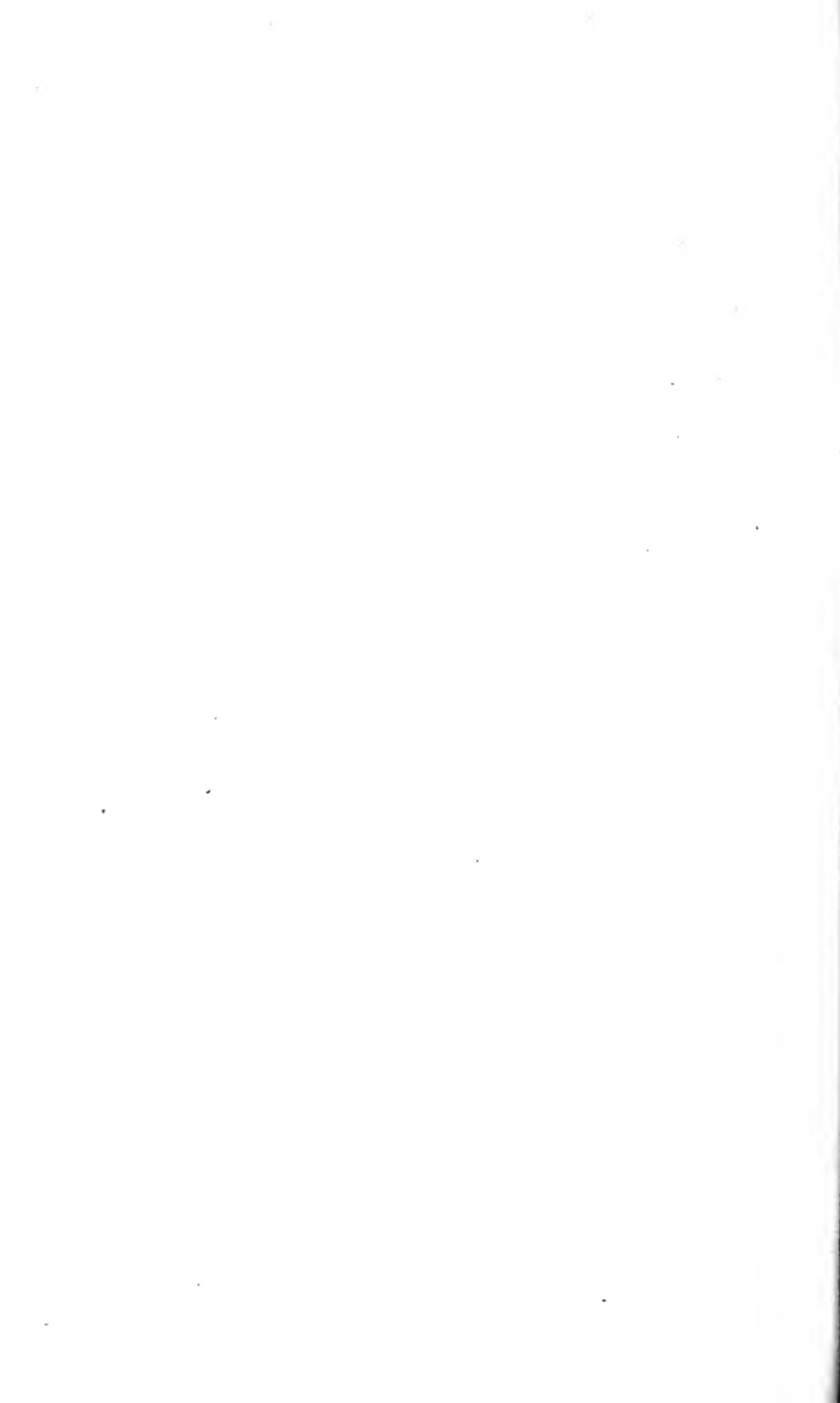
“Find something better to do.”

“You have your profession—I have no profession—I am dependent on my father—and he’s made a very large fortune, and he does not like—it would hurt his pride, to see an eldest son of his working to get his living as if he were the son of nobody . . . Besides, he likes to see me in good society—

fashionable, you know, and he gives me a very handsome allowance, I must say, and yet he's the tradesman still, as Holworth says, for he expects me to make it *do*—and if he knew that I did not, or got into debt—as every one of the rest of them does—I don't know what would become of me—He'd cast me off as easily as an old glove. . . . But you *are* a true friend, Captain Aubrey—and the first *I* ever met with—and I ought, aye, and by heaven I will," he added with a glow of generous resolution, seeming for the first time to ennable him in his own eyes,—“*I will* get this five thousand pounds which I owe you, come what will of it.”

“ You shall do no such thing,—You don't owe it me—You know I cancelled the debt—Say no more upon the subject—That evening was a most painful one to me—I shall find some other means of getting the money.”

END OF VOL. I.



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